POSSE

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH DESERT - DAY

Sand and scrub spread out under the harsh, relentless sunlight. It's a pure desert scene, timeless in its sparsity. It could be today or a hundred years ago.

Suddenly, we're moving across the sandscape. A sound that could be horses' hooves builds. The formless frontier turns into a path, then a dirt road. We're moving faster now - the dirt road shifts into a paved road. The pavement changes to freeway, the freeway to City street.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES - 1992 - DAY

The sound of horses has shifted into an almost painful beat. We're still moving, head on toward a 68 CHRYSLER IMPERIAL. Powder blue, chopped and channeled, the car glides down the street as bass thumps like cannonfire. Inside, are 4 black guys and one lady from around the way - SYKES, JODIE, LYLE and TECTOR. All of them hard, streetwise youths. Their leader EZ E, stares at the street, coolly, his shades real dark, a wool knit hat low on his head.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSEUM OF THE BLACK WEST - DAY

A pair of wrinkled black hands peacefully prepares a cup of tea.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The Imperial, cruises along passing a COP CRUISER. The blue of the car and the darkness of its occupants' faces reflects in the passenger cops' mirrored shades.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSEUM OF THE BLACK WEST - DAY

EZ E's music intrudes on the stillness of the place. The old black hands quiver in response to the noise. The tea spills.

CUT TO:

EXT. MUSEUM OF THE BLACK WEST - DAY

In front of the museum, the car pulls over. TISHA, a beautiful girl registers its presence and walks across the street. EZ begins to rap over the music.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSEUM OF THE BLACK WEST - DAY

With the music blaring and EZ rhyming, all peace is banished from the dusty storefront museum. A display of uniforms rattles from the chaos outside, like some ancient ghosts shuddering. A pair of shiny cowboy boots strides toward the door, followed by four raggedy dog paws.

CUT TO:

EXT. MUSEUM OF THE BLACK WEST - DAY

The door to the museum opens. We see an OLD MAN. Crusty and razor thin, the museum's overseer is dressed in simple yet dignified clothes. Age has not compromised his fire though, the man is still very intimidating. With strong purposeful strides, he walks to the Impala. Still rapping and goofing, the homeboys inside don't notice his presence.

OLD MAN
Hey turn that shit down!!!

Sykes nudges EZ.

SYKES
Yo, that old motherfucker don't play, man. I heard he shot a dude.

EZ
Yeah, I heard that too. He reach on me, I'll fuck his old man ass up.

The old man starts walking toward the car. Leaving JESSIE, a beat to shit old junkyard dog, in the doorway.

TECTOR
Yo have some respect he could be your grandfather. Shit don't want him fuckin with my ride.

In response, EZ cranks the tunes defiantly, rapping about his "Posse".

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EZ
...So I shot that nigga in the ass/left him bleedin' in the broken glass/talkin' 'bout my Posse...

With one rattlesnake fast motion, the Old Man reaches in the car, turns the car off, and palms the ignition key. The music stops dead.

OLD MAN
Here we have a black man, calling himself a nigger, boasting about killing another black man. If that's not the *stupidest* shit I ever heard...

EZ
Who the fuck you talkin' to old man? (the Old Man spins on his heel and walks away, *with* the keys) What the fuck is that? (to Tector) Go get the keys, man.

TECTOR
Bullshit, lookit fuckin' Cujo over there.

Jessie the dog sits drooling malevolently on the doorstep.

EZ
Fuck it, I ain't scared of this geritol motherfucker. Or his dog. I'll school this dude.

EZ walks in the museum. *Very* carefully past the dog.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSEUM OF THE BLACK WEST - DAY

Inside, the storefront appears to be half museum/half Fred Sandford's junk yard. EZ's eye picks up vague forms - uniforms, knick knacks and assorted junk from a few generations hangs on the walls. It's hard to tell if the shapes are alive or not.

The old man nowhere to be seen, EZ checks out the museum. On one wall there's a poster of Malcolm and another has King but bigger than both and hanging on the center wall is a framed portrait showing a large black man circa 1890 wearing a scowl and shiny pistols.

OLD MAN
(over)
Why ain't your narrow ass in school?

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EZ turns. The old man is setting a pitcher and two glasses on a table near the door.

EZ
Cause it's Columbus day, you know when that guinea motherfucker discovered America...

OLD MAN
And you buy that shit? How the hell can a man discover something that belong to someone else. Like America belonged to the Indians. That's like me (holds up the keys) *discovering* that there Imperial.

EZ
Why you sweatin' me and my posse? Ain't no reason to fuck with us old man.

OLD MAN
System already fucked with you son. You gonna end up dead in some drive by over two gold chains and a Rolex. And, me being an old man, I can't do nothin. All I can do is watch you die.

EZ
Fuck this. Gimme the keys old man.

The Old Man draws a shiny antique pistol lightning fast. EZ freezes. The ancient caretaker's eyes are as cold and hard as tombstones.

OLD MAN
You call me old man again and I'm gonna blow that knit prophylactic offa your dusty head. (a smile, he points with the pistol to the table) Have some lemonade. Made it myself.

EZ eyes the pistol. There's the honk of a car horn, EZ looks outside, his homies are kickin' it with a few more honeys.

SYKES
Yo, what the fuck's up in there. Not like we got *all* day.

EZ
Chill... we just talkin' (A nervous eye to the old man.) We havin' a peaceful *conversation*... over lemonade

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Looking at the lemonade, EZ sits.

OLD MAN
So where were we? School, history Jessie Lee...

EZ looks at the Old Man with a scowl. What's grandpa babbling about? Jessie, the dog, gives a growl.

EZ
You trippin'. Jessie who?

OLD MAN
Jessie Lee, leader of the *original* posse. (a gesture to the portrait) A black cowboy.

EZ
Weren't no black cowboys.

OLD MAN
Sweet Jesus your schoolin' is bad. You know why so many brothers died in Vietnam? Cause they put the black soldiers on the front line, same thing with the Spanish American war. In Cuba.

EZ looks confused at the old man's rapid fire, multi-segued history lesson.

OLD MAN
Listen, young brother... you *do* know about slavery don't you. I know they taught you that shit in school.

EZ
Yeah, yeah I got it. Least I think I do. (an eye out the door to the Imperial) So get to the point man, get to the point.

OLD MAN
Alright. what happened is when the slaves were finally freed, they didn't have shit and the white folk down South didn't have no more use for them. So some stayed but a bunch of them said "Fuck it let's move North and start our own towns. They went places like Oklahoma, Indiana any place they could get land no one else wanted. And most of the land no one wanted was what?

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EZ
(utterly baffled)
What?

OLD MAN
Reservations man. In Indian territory across the West. Why do you think most of us have Indian blood, fool? Cause the forefathers of this great country kept throwing the black man and the red man together. How the Wild West was won got a lot more to do with you than you ever thought. But of course it don't start there.

EZ rises, completely exasperated. Jerking his head to his homies.

EZ
Gimme the keys...

OLD MAN
(excited, pointing the pistol)
Sit the fuck down. (he looks out at the Imperial). Here Jessie, take care of it...

The old man tosses the keys to Jessie the dog, who catches them in his slobbering mouth and trots out to the car. EZ is now a hostage to his strange would be history teacher.

OLD MAN
(cont.)
No, the story don't start in the West. Starts in Cuba. Spanish American War. *Front Line!!!*

CUT TO:

EXT. CUBAN BATTLEFIELD - 1892 - DAY

Smoke crawls over the blighted jungle landscape and the air screams with the sound of explsions and dying men. There's a murky river cutting through the jungle, cluttered with dead bodies - black , white and Spanish. On one side of the river is the Cuban Army, the other side holds the front line of Black U.S. soldiers.

A black corpse floats in the river's bloody water. A pair of uniformed legs runs purposefully past the body. The legs belong to JESSIE LEE - a sharpshooter, silent, steadily moving, a force of nature. In one continuous shot, Jessie

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travels through the war-torn jungle We see the carnage from his point of view.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

SHEPHERD, a terrified black soldier, is pressed into the brush. He looks at Jessie completely unhinged as the steely sharpshooter crouches and fires off an amazingly accurate volley of shots..

SHEPHERD
You figure it's gonna get worse? I don't think I could take it much worse...

As an answer, Jessie pushes Shepherd down as a tremendous blast of machine-gun fire rips through the foliage.

Almost hysterical Shepherd lifts his head after the barrage. Pushing it back down, Jessie moves off.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF JUNGLE - DAY

Farther down the muggy riverside, dug in to a foxhole type jungle blind, two BLACK SOLDIERS are restraining a gigantic black man. It is OBOBO. Purely physical and constitutionally awesome, Obobo survives on animal instinct fueled by an almost unending reservoir of brute rage. Obobo is truly a man without fear... except, maybe, of closed spaces.

OBOBO
(bellowing)
God damn you little pissants let me go! I'm going over. I'm going over. Take my chances out there 'fore sitting in this rat hole! Godammit LET ME GO!!! (his eye catching Jessie, his face changing) You keep away from me Jessie Lee.

A shiny Colt .45 revolver is shoved in the big man's face.

OBOBO
Goddamit, Jessie they got a...

Gunfire rips through jungle...

OBOBO
(cont.)
...gatling gun. I ain't gonna stay here.

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The pistol cocks. Obobo's eyes go wide. A moment passes then another. Suddenly, a bugle call can be heard.

OBOBO
Retreat. Sweet music, that.

The Colt moves away from Obobo's face.

JESSIE
(over)
Stay calm.

Jessie moves on.

OBOBO
Stay calm. The man tells me to *stay calm*. I'm calm godammit. (to Jessie's retreating figure) I'm calm. Godammit I'M CALM!!!!

After a bit, another blast of gunfire rips through the brush. Obobo looks around, then darts off after Jessie.

EXT. CUBAN BATTLEFIELD - U.S. COMMAND POST - DAY

In a clearing some ways from the hellish river, lies the Field Operations Base. As Jessie enters this area, it's as if he's passed through some invisible yet mighty curtain. The white soldiers regard him with superior stares. Evidently, Jim Crow is surviving this battle well.

In the midst of a small group of *very* badass looking white soldiers, Jessie comes upon COLONEL GRAHAM. The colonel is as smooth as they come, a master at motivating his troops with praise or punishment, each meted with an ingratiating, almost nauseating smile. That is, if a block of ice *could* smile.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(detached, lecturing)
Ahh Jessie, you still alive? Of course you are. No doubt you heard the call for retreat. Hmmm. Retreat, a horrible word. Don't you think son? A good warrior would rather die than run. I know *I* would. (a very pregnant pause) But well, son, I don't think a retreat will be necessary for you and the 37th. I want to give you and the boys an opportunity to maintain the honor of a warrior. I want you to hold the line.

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For the first time we see Jessie's face, awestruck and viciously mad at the Colonel's orders.

JESSIE
Hold the line???

COLONEL GRAHAM
Yes, I know you appreciate the glory of what I'm asking you to do. You and the boys are just so damn *good* at what you do. (musing) Almost as if it was bred into you... suppose it was. (snaps his fingers) Weezie!

In a flash, the Colonel's black valet appears. WEEZIE is thin, mouthy but sharp. He may be playing house boy to the Colonel but his mind is definitely his own

WEEZIE
Yes Colonel Graham sir.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Weezie, toddle on over and get me that man, you know, the one from the stockade.

WEEZIE
Durning sir? (aside) As in insane, intolerable, *incarcerated* white trash Durning?

COLONEL GRAHAM
Yes that's the one. (back to Jessie) Now where were we?

CUT TO:

EXT. TENT - DAY

In a corner of the command post sits a plain, military tent. Two well armed sentries flank the door.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT - DAY

An intense, wiry white man, LITTLE J, more criminal than soldier, plays poker at a table with three BLACK SOLDIERS. Little J's got sharp, flinty eyes and the lean good looks of the American Midwest - albeit with a dose of white trash thrown in. Little J's quick wit and easiness could be mistaken for a soft nature. No one ever makes that mistake twice.

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Little J and an older black in spectacles face each other.

BLACK SOLDIER
Gonna raise ya, Durning..

LITTLE J
Raising? Figure you got some damn good cards there... or you're bluffing. Naaah, you wouldn't be would ya?

Little J, squints at his opponent - we see CARDS reflected in the black man's glasses.

LITTLE J
Hell, I'll call ya anyway...

His bluff broken, the spectacled soldier throws his cards down in disgust. With a cocky leer, Little J scoops up the pot — a pile of matchsticks.

LITTLE J
Damn shame we ain't playin' for money.

Weezie enters the tent, the sentry behind him. None of the men at the table even bother to salute.

WEEZIE
Uhh, Durning, sir...?

LITTLE J
"Sir?" (to the table) Hear that? "Sir." (a sarcastic salute to Weezie) As you were soldier. Hell whattaya want?

WEEZIE
Uhhh, Colonel says you... well, you should come with me.

LITTLE J
Well, now if the Colonel says so I'll be hopping right along. (extends his foot revealing the MANACLE on his ankle)

Weezie bends over and unlocks the cuff which binds Little J to the black man next to him.

LITTLE J
Be seeing you boys...

CUT TO:

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EXT. U.S. COMMAND POST - DAY

Jessie's stands, pissed off, in front of the Colonel.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Now some would say holding the line is suicide but... (all honey disappears from his voice) It's an order...

Weezie returns with LITTLE J. The wiry man's quick eyes take in the colonel and Jessie with suspicion.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Private Durning, in recognition of your "unique" talents, I'd like you to stay here and hold the line.

LITTLE J
Hold the line? But I thought that was for... (he and Jessie lock eyes)

COLONEL GRAHAM
Exactly. I'm giving you command of the 37th, the colored regiment.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(leaving) Good luck boys. Remember: *dulce decorum est pro patri mori.*

Latin aside, the men aren't stupid. They know the colonel's leaving the black regiment behind as cannon fodder to tie up the advancing enemy long enough for the rest of the soldiers to make a neat retreat.

LITTLE J
(an amazed whisper as the colonel departs)
Well, fuck me gently.

They walk toward the trenches.

LITTLE J
Figures Colonel wouldn't give me command of a shithouse if he figured there was any chance of me staying alive.

Jessie eyes the wiry man..

JESSIE
So... why you?

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LITTLE J
Got drunk playin' cards. I was losing. Figured there was a cheat. There was... so I shot 'im in the leg.

Silence. A grunt that says "Ain't nothing."

LITTLE J
(a grin)
Leg went gangrene.

JESSIE
That's bad.

LITTLE J
(almost laughing at his horrid luck)
Leg belonged to Graham's son.

A smile almost crosses Jessie's face. The moment is broken by the hurried arrival of Obobo.

OBOBO
C'mon Jessie let's get outta this hell. (an explosion booms not too far away) Fast. (the barest of salutes to Little J) Who's this?

LITTLE J
Name's Dur... shit call me Little J and we ain't going nowhere..

The men fall silent as the grave as they watch the white soldiers depart. Colonel Graham riding a white horse, surrounded by his mean looking riders.

OBOBO
Assholes.

LITTLE J
(checking his pistol out of habit)
They're they go...the U S of A's fearless Rough Riders. Yeah, must be real rough, riding away from this.

OBOBO
What are we gonna do Jessie?

JESSIE
Ask him.

OBOBO
(looks at Little J then back at Jessie)
No, really what are we gonna do?

Little J gets angry at the brush off, opens his mouth to speak. Jessie talks first.

JESSIE
We're gonna fight.

Jessie walks off. He stops at a departing supply wagon, pulling some potato masher grenades off and giving them to Obobo.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

The row of black soldiers crouches against a blind. Their faces are confused and terrified. Little J and Jessie crouch down facing them.

LITTLE J
...Dur... shit call me Little J, everyone else does.(a long pause) Okay, we follow the book. Sure it's bullshit but it's the best we got. Infantry over first, sharp shooters follow.

All eyes point to Jessie. ANGEL, a battered soldier, speaks up.

ANGEL
Sharpshooters all dead, 'cept Jessie here. Infantry ain't much better.

Little J's steely eyes go cold, like *mortuary* cold.

LITTLE J
Sounds like you're questioning my orders?

ANGEL
No sir.

LITTLE J
Alright, then forget infantry first. We stay dug in and hold the line.

Every black soldier looks at Little J with disgust, Jessie most of all.

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JESSIE
That's your orders?

LITTLE J
Yeah, you got a problem with that.

JESSIE
Only that it's stupid... and suicide.

LITTLE J
(doing a slow burn)
Well... *sir*... maybe you got a better idea?

JESSIE
(picking up the ball)
Way I figure it we got one chance. They heard the retreat, they gonna come over here and mop us up... and we're gonna let 'em

The men start to understand. Shepherd, almost paralyzed with fear, breaks.

SHEPHERD
No... No... I ain't gonna. I ain't gonna do it. I ain't.

The rest of the men seem to be catching Shepherd's contagious terror. Jessie notices this and acts.

JESSIE
We *all* gotta do it.

SHEPHERD
Ain't gonna. Ain't gonna.

Jessie approaches the panicked youth. Slowly, like a venomous snake uncoiling, he draws his pistol and puts the barrel under the frightened soldier's eye.

SHEPHERD
Jessie... God... Don't... You can't...

Jessie cocks the pistol's hammer.

SHEPHERD
I'll... I'll go.

Jessie scans the men who are a mixture of nervous and pumped. His eyes catch a soldier sitting against a palm tree.

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JESSIE
Obobo you gotta stay, go for the gun. Gonna need you Angel (a nod to the seated soldier) Hurley... Hurley!

Angel nudges Hurley, who falls over, dead - his eyes wide open.

LITTLE J
(checking his pistol)
What the fuck, I'll do it.

Jessie flashes Little J a wary, yet respectful look.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

On the other side of the river a CUBAN OFFICER surveys the opposite shoreline. Everything is deathly quiet. A CUBAN FOOTSOLDIER approaches.

FOOTSOLDIER
Vente minute y... nada.

OFFICER
(scanning the shore line thinking a while, then nodding)
Vamanos.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

A light mist begins to fall as the Cuban soldiers begin to cross the river, wading through with their rifles held chest high. Bodies float thickly in the water. A Cuban soldier nods at them.

CUBAN SOLDIER
Nero... Nero... Nero... Blanco...

Little J's body floats by.

CUBAN SOLDIER
(cont.)
Nero... Hmmm

The Cubans are almost to the opposite shore. Only a small group of men man the gatling gun. Puzzled, the Cuban soldier turns and sees...

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The corpses behind the Cubans are rising - Jessie, Angel, Little J.

CUBAN SOLDIER
Sante... Madre de Dios....

Jessie shoots the Cuban down.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

On the U.S. side of the river Obobo and with mighty heaves, sends a volley of grenades toward the gatling gun.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

Obobo's grenades find their mark, the gatling gun is out and the enemy is routed, their retreat cut off. Some Cubans have reached the shore, others muck about in the river.

EXT. CUBAN BATTLEFIELD - DUSK

Onshore, Obobo moves like a brutish ballet dancer as a Cuban soldier advances on him with a menacing bayonet. In a flash, Obobo grabs his enemy's rifle, up-ends it out of the man's hands and guts him. Armed, and beyond deadly, the giant whirls and gets another soldier in the throat. His moves mix a martial artist's grace with a street fighter's savagery. He ducks to avoid a cutlass, dispatches his attacker and moves on - a juggernaut of war.

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

Jessie stays low in the water, both pistols drawn, his eyes pick out targets through the gathering smoke and his guns do the rest. His shooting skill is almost superhuman - blindingly fast and unerringly accurate.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

While he may be a piss poor leader, Little J proves to be a natural born fighter. The lone white soldier is swiftly decimating a group of three Cubans with an unattached bayonet and a pistol. Gliding through the water, he approaches a Cuban from behind, wrapping his gun arm around his victim's neck and knifing the unfortunate soldier

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commando style. As the Cuban drops into the mire, he shoots another instantly.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

Jessie's view shifts.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Obobo is, plain and simply, beating the shit out of anything living within sight. Rifle butt, bayonet, whatever, becomes lethal in the big man's hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Angel reaches the unmanned gatling gun on the other side of the river

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

Jessie's eyes leave Obobo as he hears a voice calling his name through the wall of smoke.

SHEPHERD
Jessie! Jessie Lee!!!

Jessie turns and sees Shepherd running toward him in an unnerved frenzy. Suddenly, the youth drops dead in the shallow shore water. We see a Cuban soldier behind him. A pained expression crosses Jessie's face as he, almost languidly, shoots Shepherd's killer. Jessie turns away from his terrified comrade's corpse and sees:

Obobo has lost it. Giving over to his fury, the giant is beating a dead soldier with the butt end of a rifle. Obobo is too absorbed in his task to notice the Cuban soldier advancing on him with a drawn pistol.

Jessie fires, killing Obobo's attacker. Suddenly, a bullet grazes Jessie, he whirls...

Behind Jessie, an enemy soldier, gun drawn, groans in agony. Little J has knifed him from behind, saving Jessie's life.

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LITTLE J
Watch your back.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Happily set up behind the gatling gun, Angel bellows at the top of his lungs.

ANGEL
Get down, brothers. Get the fuck down!!!

Angel's bullets decimate any Cuban left in the river.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

As night falls and the smoke begins to clear, Jessie and the others regroup at the bloody shore. In the background Angel and a small, bloodied group of surviving black soldiers prepare to leave.

Jessie, his eye picking out the soldier Little J killed, looks evenly at the wiry white guy as if to say "You saved my life."

LITTLE J
Yeah, well, don't tell Colonel Graham. Shithead already hates me enough.

Jessie and the others make a search of the battlefield, taking extra ammo and supplies from the corpses. Jessie spots Shepherd's corpse, floating face down in the murky water.

JESSIE
(softly)
Damn it to hell..

Pulling the boy ashore, Jessie spots a bright glint of metal on the boy's neck. It is a mourning locket - like those worn in New Orleans - holding a picture of a graying black man. Jessie is transfixed by the object. Staring at it, he appears to be someone else entirely. Little J brea his reverie.

LITTLE J
What is it?

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JESSIE
Memory chain... (shaking himself back together) Person close to you dies - you carry him with you. It was his father.

LITTLE J
How do you know?

JESSIE
(closing his eyes)
I know.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S. MILITARY BARRACKS - CUBA - 1892 - NIGHT

It is early evening. Jessie sits on his bunk, still in uniform. He is holding a small BOOK, its jacket made of shiny steel. In the background Obobo blows a mournful requiem on a harmonica. Jessie stares at his reflection in the metal book cover and drifts into his memories...

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - U.S. SOUTHWEST (CUTTER'S TOWN) - 1887 - NIGHT

Five white horsemen ride past in flickering torchlight. An older black MAN is being dragged behind them. Four faces of the horsemen can be seen, the last is hidden. There is a gunshot followed by a scream.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S. MILITARY BARRACKS - CUBA - 1890'S - NIGHT

Jessie comes back to the present with a start, he slips the book back into his breast pocket. Shaking the daydream from his head, he notices Weezie looking at him with awe and concern.

WEEZIE
(obviously terrified of Jessie)
Private Lee... sir?

Jessie looks up, eyeing Weezie like a something in his gunsights.

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WEEZIE
Uh.. I just want to say, that I heard what you did today and I think it was, you know amazing and uhh.. well Colonel Graham wants to see you and uh.. well.. uh

JESSIE
Yeah?

WEEZIE
Well, he's mighty mad sir.

Still giving Weezie the hairy eyeball, Jessie walks through the barracks. The plaintive wail of Obobo's harmonica follows him out the door.

INT. COLONEL GRAHAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The colonel sits, sipping iced tea, like the Cheshire cat in his spotless office. Little J sits in a chair facing the desk. Jessie sits down as Weezie bustles about.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Thank you Weezie. Jessie, did you know that this boy here is the last survivor of the Motisa tribe?

Jessie responds with stoney silence. Weezie gets a pained expression on his face.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(cont.)
Yes, the Motisa tribe. I'll show you (waves his half empty glass).

WEEZIE
(softly, enunciating perfectly)
More tea sir?

COLONEL GRAHAM
I didn't hear you.

WEEZIE
(completely humiliated)
Mo tee sah?

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COLONEL GRAHAM
(laughing at his own joke, handing Weezie the glass)
Yes, please. Close the door and wait outside until I call you.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Outside the Colonel's office, Weezie dumps the glass and puts it to the door, listening.

INT. COLONEL GRAHAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

COLONEL GRAHAM
I hear you two put on quite a show out there today.

JESSIE
We did what we had to.

COLONEL GRAHAM
As I recall, your orders were to hold the line.

LITTLE J
Uhh, well Jess... I mean *I* saw an opportunity to get the men out and I took it.

COLONEL GRAHAM
IT IS NOT YOUR PLACE TO "TAKE OPPORTUNITIES!!!!" You're to follow orders. Do you feel you can question my ... my strategic decisions.

LITTLE J
No sir.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(shifting into his honeyed tone)
That's right. I'm thinking of the larger battle and you, you boys are thinking of yourselves. Twenty men in your unit died out there today. Do you realize that?

JESSIE
Would have been thirty.

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COLONEL GRAHAM
That's not for you to say! (a beat) I understand your frustration, son. Honestly, I do. You're a good soldier, independent, a leader. I can see how the, shall we say, vagaries of war could elude you. But I need soldiers not cowboys.

JESSIE
I'm just trying to stay alive.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(detached)
Yes, yes of course you are. Now, taking into account your... independence, I find a situation where I need a soldier, a cowboy of your, shall we say... nature for a special mission. I'll need you too, Durning, you seem to work very well with men of Jessie's... "kind"

LITTLE J
(not a trace of trust in his voice)
Exactly what kind of mission, sir?

COLONEL GRAHAM
There's a Cuban supply convoy scheduled to pass near here and for certain, uh... delicate reasons we cannot attack it openly. With my retirement so near, a scandal would be, shall we say unwise.. I would like you boys to form a small unit, say seven men. Obobo of course, he will be very useful in this. Now I want you and your men to engage the convoy, eliminate the enemy and intercept their supplies - guns, ammunition, whatever you find.

JESSIE
How many men in this convoy?

COLONEL GRAHAM
Oh I would think they'd be equipped with at least a platoon, perhaps two, perhaps a company.

LITTLE J
Nasty odds.

23

JESSIE
Seven against fifty, a hundred.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Or what have you. It's important that we keep your unit small. We don't want undue... attention.

LITTLE J
Why don't you use your special unit, you know (sarcastic) your hand - picked set of golden boys?

COLONEL GRAHAM
This mission does not exactly lend itself to their shall we say, "specialized" skills.

JESSIE
Sounds like another "glory" mission

COLONEL GRAHAM
It is son, a chance for true glory, how magnificent!

JESSIE
Suppose we say no.

COLONEL GRAHAM
You disappoint me. (a sigh) I guess if it must come to this, it must (leaning forward, pure ice) From what I know, neither of you men are in a position to decline this opportunity. Durning, we both know I can put you in the stockade forever and then some.

LITTLE J
Understood. (under his breath) Asshole.

24

COLONEL GRAHAM
(cont.)
And you Jessie... After five years in the United States Army you're still a private. You tried to desert in Manila, assaulted an officer in Nicaragua, three escape attempts in your brief time here in Cuba. In terms of defiance, you've done it all. But, of course, we have to keep you here - How do they put it? "Sentence deferred for military service." As I recall Jessie, you were sentenced to hang. (a beat) Instead, you ended up here, a life in the army. I can strip you of that "deferment" for your theatrics out there today. And without that Jessie, you're standing on the gallows.

JESSIE
So either we go on your mission, or he gets life in prison and... I die?

COLONEL GRAHAM
Must you see everything in black and white? Yes... I guess you must. If that's how you see it, so be it.

JESSIE
(hatred coating his words)
So be it.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jessie and Little J grimly leave the colonel's office. Weezie, the tea glass full, waits patiently by the door.

LITTLE J
So... who'd you do back in the States?

Jessie's stops dead in his tracks. The look he gives Little J makes sure that question never gets asked again.

JESSIE
I like you a hell of a lot better when your mouth ain't movin.

25

EXT. CUBAN JUNGLE - DAY

Jessie, Obobo, Little J and a handful of desperate looking black soldiers hunker down in the brush, waiting and watching in complete silence. After a moment or two, Obobo signals the men to remain very still.

Peering through the undergrowth, the men observe the formidable caravan. Five wagons pass through with about thirty soldiers attending it. The procession passes the unit's position. The men remain silent for a safe amount of time.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUBAN JUNGLE NIGHT

The men sit in a circle around a very small fire. It gives off only enough light to put a hellish glow on their faces.

JESSIE
Plain and simple, there's probably thirty of them to us eight. Thing is they don't know we're here...

LITTLE J
(cocky)
That's good.

JESSIE
(cont)
They also got a lot of guns...

LITTLE J
That's bad.

JESSIE
We each got to take four. Quiet. Use your hands or your knives. No guns.

The men nod, understanding.

JESSIE
Be quiet, be safe and (a gallows smile)... don't die.

EXT. THE CUBAN CAMP - NIGHT

A sentry stands watch at the edge of the encampment. Suddenly a large black hand covers his mouth, his head twists quickly and his neck snaps with a muffled pop. Obobo gently lets the body down to the ground. He moves on silently.

26

Little J finishes off another sentry, with his trademark gun arm around the throat commando tactic.

Jessie approaches yet another sentry with a knife.

CUT TO:

A black soldier moves toward a wagon, his eyes fixed on it. He doesn't see the sleeping Cuban underneath.

CUT TO:

The soldier lifts the wagon's cover, his eyes go wide in amazement.

CUT TO:

The black soldier's leg is inches from the prone Cuban's face. The Cuban's eyes open.

CUT TO:

Jessie Lee is pulling his knife out of the fallen sentry when a gunshot rings through the air followed by a scream.

VOICE
(over)
Yanquis! Yanquis! Ayuda! Ayuda!

JESSIE
Shit!

With that warning, the camp erupts into total chaos.

As a clump of soldiers are rising from their bedrolls, Jessie's pistols put them down again.

Two black soldiers are gunned down by a handful of Cubans dug in under a wagon.

Little J rounds a wagon, hears a small sound, whirls and fires, dropping two Cuban soldiers.

Obobo kicks the wheels out from the backside of a wagon, crushing the soldiers underneath it. He moves on.

Quickly the battle is over and Jessie, Obobo, Little J and two others Angel, the soldier from earlier, and PAGE, tall, whippet thin - stand in the camp's center. .

JESSIE
Quickly and quietly, look over everything. Kill anything that moves. We want guns, ammo, anything else that looks good.

27

The men move off in separate directions.

Little J comes upon a crate of rifles.

Obobo moves toward a wagon. He sees the dead black soldier and a mortally wounded Cuban beside it. As he approaches the wagon, the Cuban groans.

CUBAN SOLDIER
(more than half dead)
D'oro.... D'oro

Obobo looks quizzically at the dying man, then punches him in the throat - crushing his windpipe.

OBOBO
I ain't Dora.

The giant goes back to the wagon. Throwing back the canvas cover, he registers his shock with a sharp intake of breath.

OBOBO
Jessie!!!

CUT TO:

Jessie meets Obobo at his wagon.

OBOBO
Got something here I think you should see.

Obobo throws back the canvas to reveal a large crate filled with coins... gold Spanish coins, lots and lots of gold coins. The two men look at each other, Obobo breaks into a triumphant laugh.

OBOBO
We're rich

JESSIE
We're in trouble.

OBOBO
(still smiling)
Jesus! Man finds a crate of gold and he don't like it. Never gonna figure you Jessie.

CUT TO:

28

EXT. RIDGE - DAY

Dressed for battle, Colonel Graham rides his horse, inspection style, past his line of twelve hand picked men, the IRON BRIGADE. We see Weezie mounted on a small horse at Graham's side.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Myers, Taylor, Garrick... Three should be sufficient for this job, the rest of you stay put.

The colonel, his three brigadiers and Weezie ride off. Though, his horse is smaller than the others, Weezie keeps up by guiding the little beast expertly.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE CUBAN JUNGLE - DAY

Stripped to the waist and sweating in the sun, the five men struggle with their cargo toward the barracks. Little J scans the horizon.

LITTLE J
Jessie?

JESSIE
Sounds like the cracker's gonna start jawing again.

LITTLE J
Yeah well thought you might like to know that someone's comin'.

Barely, just barely, horsemen can be seen in the bright distance.

OBOBO
Damn, you got good eyes. I didn't see...

JESSIE
(cutting Obobo off)
Us or them?

LITTLE J
Us.

With relief, the men drop their loads to the ground. Obobo's lands with a pronounced thud. He looks at Jessie sheepishly.

29

Jessie begins to clean and load his guns. Both Little J and Obobo look at him questioningly. Jessie motions for them to do the same.

JESSIE
Angel, Page... look lively.

Understanding, the other men get ready.

The horsemen - Colonel Graham and his men - trot up to the black soldiers. Without a word Graham motions to two of his men. They dismount and make the rounds of the cargo.

Meanwhile, Weezie "appears" to have trouble settling his horse. The animal is snorting, circling.

The two soldiers open up crates without interest. Then, they approach the last crate, the one with Obobo sitting implacably on it. They move toward him, he glares at them then looks at Jessie. Jessie nods and the giant leaves his perch.

Opening the crate, the soldiers take note of the gold. They nod to Colonel Graham who breaks into a sharkish smile.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Excellent! Jessie you and your men have performed wonderfully, a truly heroic mission. (a beat) It's such a pity...

JESSIE
Why's that?

COLONEL GRAHAM
Why it's such a pity it didn't succeed my son.... a pity.

LITTLE J
(pissed, not quite understanding)
Sir we took out the Cubans we got the guns and a little extra to boot. I'd say it was a succ...

Weezie sees the brigadier next to him slowly, secretly reaching for his pistol. Weezie's horse is getting more skittish. We see Weezie's spur graze the beast's flank.

30

COLONEL GRAHAM
(waving away the words)
No, no no, That's not what happened at all son. Unfortunately, the enemy was prepared. You all fought valiantly, but alas... (a shrug) If it's any consolation, the record will state you died like heroes.

JESSIE
And I wonder what the record will say about the gold.

COLONEL GRAHAM
My dear Jessie (smiling) the gold never existed.

Accidentally on purpose, Weezie's horse slams into the brigadier's horse. The horse charges, the brigadier's gun fires. All hell breaks loose.

Regaining control of his horse, TAYLOR, the mounted brigadier shoots Page dead. Colonel Graham blasts Angel... in the back.

Jessie shoots Colonel Graham. He pitches forward, landing in the mud.

Simultaneously, Little J squeezes off a shot. The mounted horseman drops

The remaining Brigadiers, MYERS and GARRICK, have made the mistake of staying too close to Obobo. His mammoth hand shoots out, grips Myers by the throat and snaps his neck like a doll. In a blink, the same arm slams its elbow into the Garrick's larynx. The man drops.

In seconds, the battle is over. Weezie stands there, awestruck.

WEEZIE
Amazing.

LITTLE J
(aiming at Weezie)
Yeah, amazing. Just what we need, an admiration society. (To Jessie) Should I grease him?

WEEZIE
It's okay, it's okay. it's okay. I'm on your side, I saved your lives, You could thank me.

31

JESSIE
No, ain't worth the bullet.

WEEZIE
Good thinking. See, you *need* me. I know everything about the Colonel's operation, everything. So... where we going?

JESSIE
Maybe you *should* kill him.

LITTLE J
(glancing up on the ridge)
Make up your mind cause we gonna have some company soon.

Nine riders can just barely be made out on the ridge. Jessie scans the area, nothing is moving.

JESSIE
Leave him.

Jessie, Obobo and Little J ride off, leaving Weezie with the corpses.

WEEZIE
(yelling at the rapidly vanishing trio)
Oh, so Weezie saves your lives and you just ride off! You *owe* me! Shit. (sees the Colonel's body, walks over to it) And you with your "Motisa" horseshit. Doesn't look like your gonna be sippin no long cool drink no more. (mimicking the colonel) Because (he leans his face into the Colonel's) you're, shall we say, so fucking *dead*.

The colonel's eyes OPEN. His bloody hand shoots out and grabs Weezie's throat.

WEEZIE
Shitfire and save matches!

Breaking away, Weezie jumps on his tiny horse and tears off in the direction of Jessie and the others.

CUT TO:

32

EXT. JESSIE'S CAMP - CUBAN JUNGLE - NIGHT

A small campfire glows in the sticky darkness. Jessie sits sullenly staring into the flames, perhaps seeking some message in the primal element.

LITTLE J
Now what?

JESSIE
(thinking)
Like I said, I like you a whole lot better when you ain't talkin'.

LITTLE J
Well, pardon me but it seems like we ain't in too good a position here. Pinned down in the jungle.

JESSIE
You don't like it, you can just go on back to...

A slight sound comes from the bushes.

OBOBO
Shhhh...

The men tense, ready for action. Obobo creeps toward a thicket. He grabs something and heaves. Weezie lands, scared shitless, in the middle of the camp, every gun on him.

WEEZIE
It's okay, it's okay, it's okay. I'm here to help. I am. Really, I swear I can help.

JESSIE
He's bothering me... kill him.

Little J cocks his pistol.

WEEZIE
No, no, no. I can help. I can help. I CAN GET YOU OUT OF HERE!!!.

JESSIE
Hold on Little J...

Little J uncocks his gun.

OBOBO
Out of where?

33

WEEZIE
Here, Cuba. It's easy. We can get out tomorrow. It's okay, it's okay. All you have to do is meet the boat. The boat that picks up the shipment.

LITTLE J
Shipment?

WEEZIE
The shipment that takes the dead back to the states.

Everybody groans at the words "The Dead."

WEEZIE
(cont.)
They don't bury the soldiers here, they take em back home. And every fortnight I meet the boat. All you gotta do is meet the boat, get on it and you're home.

The men look at each other, it seems like a good idea.

WEEZIE
See, I *told* you you needed me.

EXT. CUBAN DOCKS - DAWN

As a light rain falls, Jessie, Obobo, Little J and Weezie crouch in silence next to a stack of what appears to be crates covered with a tarp.

WEEZIE
Boat sails in fifteen, twenty minutes.

LITTLE J
(heading toward the boat)
Well then, let's go...

Weezie stops him.

WEEZIE
You can't just go meandering on in there. Ain't no live bodies on this cruise, just me and the captain...You got to go as *cargo*.

JESSIE
Cargo?

34

Weezie pulls back the tarp, revealing caskets. He opens one... its empty, the satin lining gleams in the grey, half light.

WEEZIE
Cargo.

OBOBO
Hell No!!! Hell No!!! Rather swim!

LITTLE J
Doesn't look like we got much of a choice. We'll be going out in these boxes if we stay only choice is whether we go out alive or dead.

JESSIE
Obobo...

OBOBO
Hell no! I can't do it Jessie, I can't.

WEEZIE
It's just until you get below decks, then you can open up the lids. Won't be in there more than an hour.

OBOBO
Can't... An *hour* - that's eternity. I can't.

JESSIE
(taking out his steel jacketed book)
Obobo, my daddy gave me this Bible..

OBOBO
Can't read

JESSIE
No, no see it's got a steel plate cover. Daddy told me when I was scared to look at my reflection in it, that as long as I was in it, I was safe. You take it and look at yourself in it.

Obobo does, his terrified face is reflected in the metal.

JESSIE
An hour from now you still gonna be there. I promise.

35

Obobo nods, absorbed in his terror and reflection. Jessie and Little J begin putting the gold in the empty coffin, while Weezie heads toward the boat.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUBAN DOCK - DAY

Black dockworkers load caskets onto the boat. The rain has picked up, it's almost a storm now. Weezie watches them blithely.

WEEZIE
And there's some new "arrivals" over there.(points to four caskets)

DOCKWORKER
Seems like all this war bring home is corpses.

Pairs of men pick up the caskets. When they lift the last one, it makes a noise vaguely like "God damn!"

WEEZIE
(covering)
God damn! God damn, you're right. Ain't nothin to this war but death.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT DECK - DAY

Loaded and on its way, the boat is still within sight of the dock. Peering through the drizzle, Weezie scans the shoreline and, satisfied they've made a clean getaway, heads to a dry spot below decks.

CUT TO:

INT. BOAT HOLD - DAY

Little J, Obobo and Jessie are sitting up in their coffins like vampires at sunset when Weezie comes in. Obobo is still nervous. In a scene of easy tenderness, Jessie reads Obobo the 105th psalm from the shining Bible.

36

JESSIE
...I was a reproach against all mine enemies but especially among my neighbors, they that did see me fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man. I am like a broken vessel. But I trusted in thee O Lord I said thou art my God. My times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from them that persecute me...

EXT. CUBAN DOCKS - DAY

Horses hooves clatter down the dock. 10 sets of hooves. Colonel Graham, his leg freshly bandaged, stares off at the boat sailing into the horizon. The Iron Brigade spreads out behind him like a row of silent gargoyles.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORT TOWN - STREET - NIGHT

Humid, sensual night hangs in the Southern air like a wet black cape as the men ride into town. The fugitives are buoyant...they're free, they're alive and they're rich. Jessie, however, seems somewhere far away.

CUT TO:

EXT. HABERDASHERY - NIGHT

As they exit the shop, our boys look *good*. Jessie's got iceman black gunslinger gear - black hat, black shirt, black shotgun jeans. Obobo - well - still looks big and scary, even with a fine bowler on his head. Weezie's new clothes make him look clean and fresh and very young. The biggest transformation is Little J, who, with a long cattleman's duster, pigskin vest and slope brimmed cowboy hat, looks both dignified and deadly.

WEEZIE
(looking at Little J)
Smooth.

Little J flashes Weezie his rattlesnake glare.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - JESSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

In a warm, comfortable room. Jessie divides up the gold into four saddlebags.

37

JESSIE
(to Weezie)
Seein' as you got us out of there, figure you deserve a share too...

Weezie is beyond flattered at his inclusion.

WEEZIE
Couple days ago, man's going to shoot me. Today he's giving me a fortune. *This* - this outlaw, "desperate man on the run" - *this* is living.

JESSIE
(silencing Weezie's babbling with a stern look)
Now... we're all settled up..

OBOBO
What do you mean "settled up"?

JESSIE
I'm leaving first light... alone.

WEEZIE.
No, no, no. That's not the way it is. Unh uh. We're a *posse*, you know like the Hole in the Wall gang. You know like freebooters, bandits, one for all..

LITTLE J
Yeah, (looking around at the black faces) you guys ain't so bad. If I can say something about it I figure we'd do better together.

OBOBO
We done good this far.

JESSIE
That's true Obobo, that's true. But I gotta do something that's best done alone.

WEEZIE
You can't just up and leave. We're all *partners*.

Everybody gives Weezie a silencing look.

JESSIE
You're good men, you'll do fine.

38

OBOBO
And what about you?

Jessie has no answer to the big man's question.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDNIGHT INN - NIGHT

STREET PERFORMERS sing a beautiful old SPIRITUAL as Little J, Obobo and Weezie each go out to enjoy the many fruits that freedom, a full pocket and the twon have to offer.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM - GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

In a smoky, dimly lit room, a semi-circle of 4 serious gamblers ply their trade: SILAS, white, his face all straight edges and beady eyes, MONTY, a young black guy in over his head. AARON, Monty's brother, older, more weathered and, at the very end of the table, FATHER TIME, quite simply the smoothest, blackest player to ever work the felt. A thick gold watch chain snaking from his vest, Time dresses in the height of riverboat chic. A door opens and CAPPY, the jovial and overweight owner of the cardroom escorts Little J inside The lean man's face is plastered with a gigantic grin.

CAPPY
The game is poker, any known variation permitted as long as everyone agrees. 5 dollar ante, with one dollar a hand going to the house. Maximum bet... (shrugs his shoulders) Gentlemen this here's... What'd you say your name was?

Having left the duster behind, Little J has put on an entirely new persona for the card game, sort of a Gomer Pyle meets the Okie from Muskogee. Obviously, he's playing the rube.

LITTLE J
(goofy voice, good natured to the point of being annoying.)
Names Jimmy Teeters but my friends they call Little J, you know, an account of I was the youngest. .

The men at the table flash each other looks like sharks presented with a bleeding swimmer.

39

CAPPY
Little J... And that's Silas, Monty, Aaron and... (smiles) Father Time.

LITTLE J
Father Time? Hell, that's an awfully unique tag for a man to be carrying. How come they call you that?

FATHER TIME
(pulling out a solid gold pocket watch and checking it)
Cause we can sit at this table for eternity and a day and ain't *nobody* going to beat Father Time...

The men chuckle.

LITTLE J
(sitting down)
Well, hot damn. We'll just see about that boys.

The gamblers smile at the newcomer's moronic bravado.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIZZIE'S - NIGHT

Obobo and Weezie stand in front of what appears to be a black saloon and nightclub. A red light burns brightly by the door as wild laughter issues from within.

OBOBO
Weezie, my boy. We done our time in hell so I figure we about due for a little slice of heaven

The big man pushes Weezie through the door.

CUT TO:

INT. LIZZIE'S - NIGHT

Our boys have just stepped into your textbook bordello, albeit black. Half-clad ladies - mulattoes, octoroons, all delectable shapes and sizes - mill around from client to client. Weezie's eyes go wide as a cornered rabbit's at the sight. MARA, a stunning courtesan, notices their entrance and drapes herself around Obobo's sizable neck.

MARA
C'mere sugar...

40

WEEZIE
(utterly unhinged)
Obobo, Obobo, Obobo. This place... We're in a ...bordello. As in house of ill repute... as in *this is a whore house*...

OBOBO
(distracted by Sarah. laughing)
Yes indeed, little brother... (notices Weezie's fear) Wait a second, don't tell me you *never*...

MARA'S identical twin, LARA, appears at Weezie's elbow.

LARA
C'mere honey...

Lara's hand caresses Weezie's pigeon chest.. Pure terror covers the youth's face. Obobo's laugh echoes off the velvet covered walls.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - JESSIE ROOM - NIGHT

Jessie, shirtless, cleans a shiny silver Colt six shooter. He's obviously preparing for something big - another Colt gleams on the bed along with a Bowie knife and small Derringer pistol. Looking out of place, the bible shines next to the weapons. Jessie inspects his tools like an icy professional. The gunslinger does a couple of lighting fast quick draws then stops... his mind slipping off somewhere...

CUT TO:

EXT. AN OPEN FIELD - 1887 - DAY

Jessie, freer and happier, plows a field, dressed in simple workman's clothes. He looks up and beams as LANA, a dusky beauty calls to him.

CUT TO:

INT. KING DAVID'S SHACK - 1887 - NIGHT

It's simple dinner for CARVER, a well-built youth Jessie's age, LANA, Jessie, King David, SARAH RED CROW, Lana'a Apache mother and PAPA JOE, Lana's gritty father. Everyone seems at ease, happy in each others company.

41

King David sits at the head of the table, half preaching. Jessie is barely listening, concentrating more on running his hand up Lana's leg. Ben, one eye on Jessie's hand, *is* listening intently to his idol's words.

KING DAVID
...It's just natural progress, gotta happen sooner or later.

CARVER
But seems to me, Cutter's Town folk ain't gonna let us have any land - even reservation land - without a fight...

JESSIE
(half a laugh)
Ain't gonna be no fightin'

KING DAVID
(a smile to his son)
That's right, better to wait forever than to fight. Cause, well... there are things in this world you can't fight with guns for. You got to fight with your heart cause when you kill for a dream, you usually end up killing the dream too. And that's what hell is... watching your dreams die.

Jessie looks up at his father, larger than life against the setting sun and suddenly the image shifts...

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - 1887 - NIGHT

Like before, the five horsemen file past, the last face still obscured. As they move by, the riders reveal King David tied to a tree, blood running down his face, screaming. Flames reach up toward his tortured grimace.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - 1887 - DAY

His face angry and terrifying, Jessie blasts away a row of bottles with his pistols.

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - JESSIE'S ROOM - 1892 - NIGHT

Jessie snaps back to the present, his gun dangling from his hand, sweat gleaming on his torso. For the hundredth time, he checks and cleans his pistol.

42

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM - GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

Monty's brow shines with perspiration as the game continues.

MONTY
God damn!!!

The other men throw their cards down in disgust as Father Time scoops the pot toward his already mammoth pile of winnings.

FATHER TIME
(in a voice that makes silk seem like sandpaper)
Tick, tock, tick tock...

AARON
Man's got the touch.

SILAS
Man's touching this boy a little too hard.

FATHER TIME
Come now, Silas you ain't quitting?
(checks his watch with a flourish)
Night's still so very young.

Silas glares at his opponent and hands him the cards

SILAS
Just deal.

And deal he does. He shuffles and slides the cards around with a magician's dexterity. So quick and seamless you can barely hear the cards slapping against each other. It's hypnotic. Right before he deals though, something catches Little J's eye. Our canny gambler sees Father time do a sleight of hand, slipping a pile of cards underneath the deck - a classic "balloon" masterfully executed.

Father Time catches Little J's eye, some wordless conversation passes between the two, fellow grifters sharing a guilty secret.

LITTLE J
(staring straight into Father Time's eyes with a *huge* Okie grin)
Yes sireee bob, the man's *definitely* got the touch...

43

CUT TO:

INT. LARA'S ROOM - LIZZIE'S - NIGHT

Fully clothed, Weezie squirms on a chair as Lara hangs her camisole on a bedpost.

LARA
You still dressed?

WEEZIE
(on the verge of a stroke)
It's okay, it's okay, it's okay. I like it better that way.

Lara looks at Weezie with a raised eyebrow, is he kinky or a virgin? She figures it out.

LARA
I *know* it's okay baby. Everything is perfect, (she purrs in his ear) purr-fect...

Lara's hands head south.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - JESSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Prepared and packed, Jessie turns in for the night.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM - GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

Little J's pile seems to have grown, it's almost as big as Father Time's. It appears that teamwork's paying off for the two.

LITTLE J
(slapping down his cards with a smile)
Well, god damn! Triplet Queens and the One Eyed Jack boys... blind as justice.

AARON
Ain't no justice at this table

FATHER TIME
Boys... a hundred years from now, ain't nobody gonna know the difference.

44

Father Time moves through his shuffle again. But at that critical moment - the second he slides his (and Little J's) cards under the deck - Silas' hand snakes out and grabs his wrist catching him in the act.

SILAS
Looks like Father Time done run out of time

Silas' other hand brings up a pistol and puts it to Time's forehead.

FATHER TIME
(not a drop of sweat on his brow)
Now, boys..

Silas pulls back the hammer. Father Time shoots a look to Little J.

Quick and violent, Little J up-ends the table, coins and bills fly everywhere. The heavy table lands on Silas, knocks over Monty and Aaron (who grab some money off the floor) and gives Father Time and Little J the opening to *move*... straight out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

Cappy stares awestruck as Little J and Father Time burst into the room. Looks like Time's skills extend to his body as well as his hands, he's running full bore *over* the craps, blackjack and roulette tables, his loping strides kicking money into the air. Little J follows, fast and low, twisting around, into and through the den's crowded patrons who are busy grappling for loose cash. Cappy's face is livid, in a few short seconds his establishment has become total chaos.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

Little J and Father Time burst through the door and go tearing down the city street as dawn creeps up on the horizon.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

Silas, Monty and Aaron are having trouble making their way through the insanity on the casino floor.

45

CUT TO:

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - OBOBO AND WEEZIE'S ROOM - DAWN

Dawn creeps through the windows as Obobo gets ready for bed. Weezie, having gotten home earlier, is already tucked away.

WEEZIE
Okay, Okay... I'm *sorry*... I didn't mean to be... *embarrassing* or anything like that. You know I finished... well *fast*. It's not like I was trying to interrupt you, okay?

OBOBO
(smiling)
So you "finish" - in half a minute - and run on into my room, lookin' to tear on outta there. Little brother...

A sound catches Obobo's ears, he goes to the window and looks out.

OBOBO
(a trace of regret in his voice)
There he goes.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDNIGHT INN - DAWN

Jessie rides away from where the horses are tied up.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - OBOBO AND WEEZIE'S ROOM - DAWN

Weezie looks at Obobo, his eyes full of questions.

WEEZIE
Okay, I know we're not really partners or *together* like the James gang or anything but seems to me there's something a little *wrong* with your friend there.

OBOBO
Man's got something twisting around in his mind, don't know what it is but I figure he'd ride to Hell and gun down the Devil himself if'n it'd fix it.

46

WEEZIE
(picturing that showdown)
"Jessie this is Satan." "Satan this is Jessie."

Weezie's imaginary scenario is interrupted when Little J slides through the door, Father Time on his heels, and motions for quiet.

LITTLE J
(whispering)
This is Father Time and if anyone asks you ain't seen us.

Father Time tips his hat like a gentleman.

OBOBO
(his whisper still pretty loud)
Little J, you really taking a shine to the brothers ain't you?

LITTLE J
Shhhhh. (whispering) You know I think it might be a good idea we leave town, go somewhere friendlier... like Texas.

Little J and Father Time cross the room to the door that connects Obobo's room to Little J's and go through it. When they're gone Weezie gives Obobo a look of surprise and a shrug.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - LITTLE J'S ROOM - NIGHT

Little J gathers up his things silently as Father Time looks on.

LITTLE J
(whispering, a little aggravated.)
Cheatin's only good if you don't get caught.

FATHER TIME
(whispering)
It's a hazard of the occupation my man.

LITTLE J
(whispering)
Whatever.

47

Father Time's eye catches on the saddlebag Little J picked up, the one filled with gold coins.

FATHER TIME
(whispering)
We could always try it again in Tex...

LITTLE J
Shhhh.

The men tense at the sound of boots clicking on the landing outside. The sound stops. Nothing.

Father Time and Little J wait few beats. Just as their faces melt in relief...

The door is kicked in with a crash. Little J draws his knife and pistol. Father Time produces an immaculate pearl handled revolver In the doorway stands Silas,Monty and Aaron, all of them ragingly pissed off.

Everyone's got everyone covered. It's a perfect standoff.

SILAS
(to Little J)
Now I got no trouble with you.

Little J's eyes just narrow.

FATHER TIME
Tick, tock, tick tock...

The tension builds then... BOOOM! a shot rings out and Silas' head explodes. Monty and Aaron bolt into the room followed by 5 of the Iron Brigade.

Coolly, efficiently the Iron Brigade slaughter Monty and Aaron. Bullets chase Little J and Father Time across the room, the two men sprinting just ahead of the leaden barrage. They cross to the far end of the room and jump straight through the window. Father Time goes first, Little J, saddlebag in hand, follows soon after. But not soon enough, a bullet rips through his shoulder on the way out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDNIGHT INN - DAY

Father Time and Little J slide down the roof, fast, gracelessly landing on the ground below... right next to the horses. Quickly they scramble toward the animals.

CUT TO:

48

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - OBOBO AND WEEZIE'S ROOM - DAY

Weezie, completely terrified, stares at the doorway where...

Colonel Graham, looking pompous and lethal stands. Four more Iron Brigadiers are with him. Obobo is nowhere to be seen.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(shaking his head)
Weezie, Weezie... It's not so much that I'm angry... I'm *disappointed.*

Graham's icy killers cock their weapons.

Obobo, under the bed, hears the sound.

OBOBO
Aaaaaaaahhhhh Fuck this!!

In a Herculean display of strength, Obobo up-ends the bed and, using it as a combination shield/battering ram pushes the Iron Brigadiers out the door

CUT TO:

INT. MIDNIGHT INN -SECOND FLOOR LANDING - DAY

And out onto the landing. Weezie follows right behind, lugging the saddlebags. Colonel Graham lands with an unceremonious thud, his bad leg twisting painfully under him. Obobo's momentum pushes the brigadiers up against and through the railing.

The brigadiers fall to the Inn's lobby, the bed's mattress breaking their fall only slightly.

For a second, Obobo teeters on the precipice, fighting to regain his balance. Weezie, with a quick mighty jerk on the big man's belt pulls him back. The two run down the stairs, Obobo in the lead.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDNIGHT INN - LOBBY - DAY

It's a big old mess on the floor. Guests screaming, the manager freaking, Colonel Graham's single minded psychopaths struggling to free themselves from the bed.

Obobo and Weezie come off the stairs at a fast clip. Obobo sails through the front door.

49

Weezie is almost there when a HAND grabs his ankle. The skinny guy crashes to the floor, PARKER, a particularly big and ugly Iron Brigadier, holding his leg in a death grip.

WEEZIE
Shit. Shit. Shit.

Adrenaline pumping, Weezie kicks Parker's face. Once... Twice... and the hand lets go. Weezie makes it out the door with a bloody faced Parker in hot pursuit.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDNIGHT INN - DAY

Weezie makes it to the horses a couple of steps ahead of Parker. Obobo can be seen in the middle distance making a clean getaway. With an awesome vault for his size, Weezie saddles up and takes off. Wiping blood from his ruined nose, Parker follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORT TOWN - STREETS - DAY

This is the car chase from "Bullitt" on horseback. While Weezie may have his shortcomings as a lover and a fighter, he's king hell on a horse. Fast, he maneuvers the animal through the early morning streets of the city, Parker hanging tight on his ass.

With a neck-snapping turn, Weezie bolts down an alley. Parker sticks like glue.

In the distance, the end of the alley shines like a portal to heaven.

Suddenly, a horse drawn cart of brassware pulls in front of the opening.

Weezie jumps the horse. An equestrian masterpiece, both rider and mount sail over the cart, not a single pot clangs.

Parker doesn't fare so well. He crashes straight into the cart, bringing down a blizzard of pots and pans and doing further structural damage to his already trashed face.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN ROAD - DAY

Against the blazing sun, Jessie's horse heads out of town. Little J and Father Time's horses make tracks to join him.

50

Then Obobo. A few beats later, moving like a bat out of hell, comes Weezie. Complete, The Posse speeds toward fate.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE POSSE'S CAMP - NIGHT

One thing's for sure, R & R is definitely *over*. The men have ridden hard to escape the Iron Brigade - real hard - and it shows. Morale's so low that Obobo can only manage a few half-hearted bleats on his harmonica.

WEEZIE
(to Jessie's silent form)
See. *See* what happens when we don't stick together. Like it or not, we're a team... Now with Graham and his Iron Brigade on our asses we *got* to stay together.

LITTLE J
(bandaging his arm)
Iron Brigade? I wondered what he called those shitheels Seems to me, though, we'd have a better chance of losing 'em separate.

FATHER TIME
"Divide and conquer," as the man once said.

WEEZIE
Unh uh. Ain't no dividing and ain't no conquering with those boys. See, I *know* what they all about. Those bastards are *evil*... See, I did the paperwork on them. They're all killers

OBOBO
Name a soldier that ain't

WEEZIE
No I mean *killers* from before the army. Hell, Graham got 'em out of prison on a "military deferment"

Jessie's ears prick up at the words.

51

WEEZIE
(cont.)
But, still, he had to pull a hell of a lot of strings to spring *those* guys. I mean, they did some real horrifying shit. Guy chasing me, Parker, he carved up his wife and kids one day pretty as you please. Was feeding his baby daughter to the dogs when the Sheriff come to get him.

FATHER TIME
And now these charming men are after you boys...

LITTLE J
Yeah, I guess it ain't in the cards for us to be rich *and* alive at the same time.

JESSIE
We ain't dead yet.

FATHER TIME
You also aren't very rich.

All eyes turn.

FATHER TIME
(cont.)
(Plucking a coin from his pocket) these Spanish coins, they're very beautiful. They're also very rare and, judging by your "Iron" friends' strong desire to kill you all, *very* hot. You can't spend them unless you want to leave a shiny trail for those monsters to follow.

Father Time's words sink in.

LITTLE J
Beautiful... we're dead and we're poor. I'm not sure which one I hate most.

There's a moment of silence as the outlaws contemplate their situation.

OBOBO
So Jessie, what are we gonna do?

52

JESSIE
(a deep breath, resigned to his companions' presence)
I still gotta take care of some things, Colonel Graham on us don't change that. Looks like Weezie's right, though, we should stick together. But (a beat) none of you get in my way, no matter what happens.

WEEZIE
See, see... Together it's okay, it's okay. Together we're unstoppable. Jessie, Little J, Obobo, (points to Father Time) Mr. well-dressed, me... we're a *posse*... "Desperadoes on the high plains..."

OBOBO
(Only half amused)
Little brother, will you shut the fuck up.

Obobo picks out a tune on his harmonica, again it is the requiem we've come to know as Jessie's Theme.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE POSSE'S CAMP - NIGHT

The fire has burnt down to glowing embers. The outlaws sleep, except for Little J who's keeping watch with (and on) Father Time

LITTLE J
(whispering)
... Like I said, that stack of yours works best with a *partner*... spread the take around... less noticeable.

FATHER TIME
(to himself) Partners? Hmmm. Tell me, how come you with these boys? How come you take *his* orders? How come you want to throw in with *me*?

53

LITTLE J
How you mean? (a beat) Oh... well, seems only reason white man got a problem with the black man is cause he's afraid. You know, people so afraid of what they don't know. Me (that half evil, half mishievious kid smile), me *I* ain't afraid of nothing.

FATHER TIME
(whispering)
(a nod) Yeah... but I think most people would notice if we was partners.

LITTLE J
No, no, no... it's the "Two Strangers" scam, only you and I...

A noise silences them, they whirl to check it out, guns cocked. It's Jessie thrashing in his sleep.

Holstering their pistols, the sentries gaze at Jessie's twitching form, wary and nervous. We move closer to Jessie's twisted face.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - 1887 - NIGHT

As before the horsemen ride past four faces visible but this time *very* visible. The first face - SHERIFF DICK, immense rage lighting his face, a star on his chest. He's followed by DEPUTY TOM, WATT and JOHN - perfect examples of pure white trash. The last man's identity is still hidden. We hear the scream then see King David, bellowing in agony, flames rising to his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE POSSE'S CAMP - 1892 - NIGHT

Jessie continues to thrash while Little J and Father Time look on.

FATHER TIME
(shaking his head)
The man can't even find peace in sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - WINDER'S GULCH, TEXAS - 1892 - DAY

5 riders - four black, one, white - glide into the seedy backwater town like a mean wind.

54

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWINDER'S SALOON - DAY

A weatherbeaten white man, ARCHIE, steps out behind a noisy saloon, carrying a crate. He stacks it. Hearing the sound of a harmonica - Jessie's Theme - he looks up. Obobo's on a rooftop in silhouette. Strange. Archie wheels around. Nothing. Then, a voice cuts in out of nowhere.

JESSIE
(over)
Figured you'd still be around these parts.

Jessie appears, like a spectre, from around a corner.

ARCHIE
You... I thought you were dead. (turns to run inside)

There's the ominous sound of a pistol drawn - quickly - and cocked.

ARCHIE
Now Jessie, I didn't have nothing to do with what happened back then. Hell, they wasn't even my friends... not even *acquaintances*...

JESSIE
(icy calm)
I know that Archie... (putting the gun in Archie's face) But I figure you might know where some of your old "acquaintances" are at...

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - WINDER'S GULCH - DAY

The outlaws are hanging by the hitching post like badass hooligans. His face clouded with thought, Jessie walks past them wordlessly. Before he mounts, he turns to Father Time.

JESSIE
Think I found a way to make that gold less hot.

The gunslinger saddles up and rides off, his men follow.

55

EXT. BLACKSMITH'S - DAY

The Posse stops in front of the small, utilitarian shack. Jessie nods to Little J and Obobo who dismount, heading inside.

INT. BLACKSMITH'S SHOP - DAY

A brawny BLACKSMITH is working the forge as the two gunslingers enter the cluttered shop. Obobo drops four saddlebags at Little J's feet and busies himself with the steel bars hanging around the shop. The smithy eyes the men with suspicion.

LITTLE J
I got a job for ya. Real good one.

SMITHY
Yeah, tell me about it.

LITTLE J
I like ya, you don't talk much. (opening a saddlebag), the smithy's eyes go wide) Think you can melt these down into bars.

The smithy nods.

LITTLE J
(cont.)
Think you can do it without talkin' about it.

SMITHY
Depends on the price.

LITTLE J
(his grin widening)
I do like the way you think! Let's see... each bar end up weighing a pound. We give you two.

SMITHY
Make it three and I'll have it done by this afternoon.

LITTLE J
Three it is. My friend's gonna stick around, make sure you do a good job. I'd advise you to try and work quiet, he don't like noise... particularly talkin'

56

The blacksmith looks over at Obobo. The big man turns and smiles, in his hands he holds a steel bar twisted into a pretzel shape.

EXT. BLACKSMITH'S SHOP - DAY

The Posse, minus Obobo, rides off.

INT. BLACKSMITH'S SHOP - DAY

The smithy is sweating under his labors and Obobo's gaze. He cracks open a mold, revealing gold bars and adds them to a stack of their brothers.

Little J, Weezie, Father Time and Jessie enter. Jessie, his hat over his face, settles in a shadowy corner and lets Little J do the talking.

LITTLE J
Done?

SMITHY
Soon as this batch cools.

Father Time inspects the bars

FATHER TIME
Real nice. Beautiful thing about gold, can change its shape any which way and it still endures. Timeless.

JESSIE
Pack 'em up.

Obobo and Weezie begin putting the bars into the saddlebags.

SMITHY
I was thinking, it was a lot of work, especially working so careful and quiet. Maybe we make it five.

LITTLE J
(his grin turning malevolent)
You gettin' greedy.

SMITHY
I just want what I earned... it was hard work.

57

JESSIE
(letting his face come to light)
Man wants what he deserves.

The smithy gasps as he recognizes Jessie

SMITHY
You!

There's a split second where Jessie flashes on the Smithy's shocked expression - it's JOHN from the flashbacks.

Obobo and the others are amazed at the blacksmith recognizing Jessie, as well as what happens next.

Scared, quick and strong, the blacksmith hurls his hammer at Jessie's head. Fast as a cat, Jessie catches the heavy hammer, draws and fires, killing the blacksmith.

WEEZIE
Wait, wait a second. Uhh, wait, *that* wasn't part of the plan.

LITTLE J
(staring at the scene)
What the fuck?

JESSIE
(impassive)
Let's go.

Little J, Weezie, Father Time and Obobo stare at Jessie's retreating form with new wonder.

EXT. BLACKSMITH'S DAY - DAY

Jessie's mounted and ready to tear off. The men file out. Father Time, taking long, purposeful strides, storms up to Jessie - confronting the gunslinger.

FATHER TIME
Now I don't pretend to know what personal road you're following here. That's your business and I don't really care about that. But if you're going to be murdering people in front of me, that's *my* business.

JESSIE
Doesn't have to be. *You* don't have to be here.

58

FATHER TIME
I know that but next time you're going to do something whimsical like kill someone, tell me so I can *decide* whether to stick around your crazy ass or not.

Jessie thinks for a second, then nods. Father Time and the others mount up.

JESSIE
Father Time?

FATHER TIME
Yeah.

JESSIE
Thought you might like to know... I'm gonna rob a bank next.

Jessie takes off. The men, dumbfounded, follow.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Jessie, pulls in front of the bank, dismounts. The men look at him questioningly, unsure if he's got a plan or if he's just gone berserk.

JESSIE
If you boys are gonna tag along, you could make yourselves useful...

The men hesitate.

JESSIE
(turning away to go inside)
Suit yourself... (a beat) There *is* money involved you know...

That's enough of a reason for Little J and Father Time. They slide out of their saddles and join Jessie. Obobo and Weezie follow right after - for other reasons.

WEEZIE
"Bank this is Jessie." "Jessie this is a Bank."

CUT TO:

59

INT. BANK - DAY

A bespectacled and bearded BANK MANAGER nervously concludes a transaction over a desk as patrons queue up at nearby windows. It's a peaceful scene - straight out of Norman Rockwell - until...

Jessie and the boys storm through the door with a bang. Father Time covers the side door, Obobo the rear as Jessie and Little J take charge. Only Weezie seems completely out of his element.

LITTLE J
Ladies and gentlemen this is a robbery. My friends and I would greatly appreciate if you would please get down on the floor. Otherwise we're gonna have to shoot ya.

JESSIE
(to Weezie)
You, go with him (points to the prostrate bank manager) and fill up a couple of bags.

WEEZIE
With what?

LITTLE J
(rolling his eyes)
Money.

WEEZIE
Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, I understand.

Weezie follows the bank manager toward the windows. Nervously he talks to the bank customers sprawled on the floor.

WEEZIE
(cont.)
It's okay, really it's okay. We're not going to shoot you, I mean, yeah if we have to we'll shoot you but it's not like we *want* to or anything.

CUT TO:

INT. BEHIND THE TELLER WINDOWS - BANK - DAY

Scared, the bank manager stuffs cash into Weezie's bag.

CUT TO:

60

INT. MAIN ROOM - BANK - DAY

Jessie looks down at a little girl at his feet.

JESSIE
(tipping his hat)
Afternoon Miss...

GIRL
(looking up terrified at the towering bandit)
H... h...hello.

JESSIE
Why don't you go get the Sheriff?

GIRL
That man said he'd shoot us if'n we moved...

JESSIE
(smiling sweetly)
I'll shoot ya if ya don't

The girl bolts toward the door. Jessie makes eye contact with Obobo, who lets her go. Obobo stares at Jessie, his eyes shooting question marks.

EXT. BANK - DAY

The Posse runs out with no problems, Weezie carrying a full canvas bag. Mounting up, the outlaws are good to go - only Jessie stays put.

LITTLE J
Jessie... let's get *out* of here.

JESSIE
Waiting for the Sheriff.

WEEZIE
Jessie, really I know you're in charge and everything here but I'm beginning to worry about you.

JESSIE
Ain't forcing you to stay.

LITTLE J
(squinting down the road)
Don't make no difference anyway...

61

Turning, Jessie and the others see three horsemen coming toward them

JESSIE
(turning tearing off down the street)
GO!!!!

Jessie and Weezie leading, the men turn and bolt down the street. It's a close chase but it feels that Jessie's holding back.

An alley leads off the street, with a nod to Weezie, Jessie leaps off his horse, rolling in the dirt. His mount follows the rest.

The Lawmen pass the alley. The first horse goes by, then the second, then.

Wham! A board whips out of the alley and knocks DEPUTY WATT off his horse. The plump, corrupt looking man lands shocked.

Jessie standing over the fallen lawman, flashes on the face for a second - it's the second horseman from the flashback.

JESSIE
Watt.

Watt stares at him, trying to make a connection, suddenly his face drains.

WATT
Jessie I...

JESSIE
I know, you thought I was dead... Up!

Watt gets to his feet. Jessie falls into a gunfighter stance.

WATT
(terrified)
I ain't gonna shoot against ya, Jessie, that'd be suicide.

JESSIE
Yes you are.

Methodically, Watt undoes his buckle and drops his gunbelt. It drops and he kicks it over to Jessie. Unarmed, he's gambling Jessie won't kill him.

He's right, Jessie bends over to retrieve Watts pistol.

62

In the split second Jessie's down, Watt pulls another pistol from his boot. In a flash his hand comes up, eyes aiming. Nothing. Jessie is gone.

Wind whistles through the sandy streets.

Fast and ghostly, Jessie pops out of the alleyway. Watt opens fire, Jessie squeezes off two rounds blowing a hole in Watt's midsection.

With a quick goodbye look to Watt Jessie runs and vaults to the Deputy's horse.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIDGE - DUSK

As the sun drops and a pregnant moon rises in the sky, Jessie stands on a rocky ridge. Below, discuss the events of the day.

EXT. THE POSSE'S CAMP - DUSK

LITTLE J
(sarcastic, a little pissed)
Hell of a day, don't you think?. Yeah I'd say it was a full day's work. Man commits murder for breakfast, then a bank robbery for lunch. What's for dinner? An Indian massacre?

OBOBO
Don't think Jessie got no problem with the Indians.

LITTLE J
But blacksmiths... well, they bother him something fierce.

FATHER TIME
Strange. (a look to the ridge) but the man *has* filled our pockets.

OBOBO
Still... didn't make sense.

WEEZIE
(soft, rising as he puts a few things together)
Yes it did. Oh yeah, sure as stinky shit it did.

63

LITTLE J
What the fuck are you talking about?

WEEZIE
Yeah, I got it.. or part of it. You know in Cuba, I did the paperwork on everybody, rank , pay... deferments... including Jessie

FATHER TIME
(all ears)
Go on.

WEEZIE
Okay, okay... shit he's probably gonna shoot me for this Okay.. uhhh now I know some bad shit happened where he's from, some *really* bad shit and he got the hard choice - army or prison... cept in his case I think it was army or hangin'

LITTLE J
You really ain't as stupid as you talk...

WEEZIE
(a smarmy smile)
Thanks. Anyway (looking around) we all saw that blacksmith, would you say that guy *knew* Jessie?

FATHER TIME
If I were a betting man, and I usually am, I'd lay odds on that little brother.

WEEZIE
So, uh... I would say that what happened today was, well, was payback for whatever happened back home...you know in (thinking)

JESSIE
(over)
Cutter's Town

Surpised by Jessie's spectral appearance, the men are very wary and a little spooked. Except Little J who dives right in.

LITTLE J
That what this is about Jessie?.
Revenge?

64

The answer can be read easily on Jessie's face.

LITTLE J
Then I got just one question... You done?

Jessie shakes his head.

LITTLE J
You thought about what you're going to do when, and if, you finish this up?

JESSIE
Dakota Territories. But tomorrow, we cut through Diablo Plains, save some time.

WEEZIE
But, but that's Apache territory.

Everyone looks at him with a "No Shit" glare.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The outlaws pass a RAILROAD CREW. Black, White and Chinese faces labor on the iron line stretching off to the horizon. Progress is coming, sure and steady. A sign "Pacific Railroad with an interconnected PR logo, rises near the rails. A worksong (on the order of "John Henry") rises up from the sweating crew.

Away from the workers, Weezie perches at the top of a TELEGRAPH POLE. Quickly, he snips the wire and shimmies down.

CUT TO:

INT. WINDER'S GULCH - BANK - DAY

Colonel Graham and the Iron Brigade question the bearded Bank Manager and his employees.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(all smiles)
Yes,that sounds like Jessie's sort of wickedness. Now,(scanning) did any of you good people see which road these vermin used.

A nervous teller raises her hand.

65

COLONEL GRAHAM
Marvelous.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Jessie and the men continue their long ride. They're at the edge of Diablo Plains - Indian Territory. Or more acurately what *used* to be Indian territory. Now all that's left is a burnt out village. A few battered INDIANS are gathering their possessions under the watchful eyes of a handful of SOLDIERS.

The Posse falls silent at the once proud native faces scarred by humiliation and smallpox file past. A strapping BRAVE senses something and looks up straight at Jessie. When the Indian turns, we see a horrible scar zig-zagging down one side of his face.

CUT TO:

INT. WINDER'S GULCH - WELLS FARGO OFFICE - DAY

Under the harsh gaze of Colonel Graham and a bandaged Parker, a CLERK is shaking his head.

CLERK
Can't do nothing for you boys. Lines are down.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Such a pity. Well I suppose if you want something done right, you've got to do it yourself.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIABLO PLAINS - DAY

The outlaws pass through the staggering landscape of Diablo Plains, each deep in thought.

EXT. DIABLO PLAINS - DAY

The men rein to a stop at a signpost. An old worn sign reads: CUTTER'S TOWN - 35 MILES. beneath the weathered wooden signs a new board reads: FREEMANVILE 25 MILES. This last sign has particular interest to Jessie.

JESSIE
Freemanville...

66

LITTLE J
Don't quite follow you. What's Freemanville?

JESSIE
(distracted, immersed in memories)
A dream. Thought it was dead. (a beat) It's a town. A black town. Cutter's town can wait. We go... to Freemanville

FATHER TIME
(something clicking in his mind)
You know boys, I'm thinking it might not be such a bad idea that I go into this here Freemanville a little later, so as not to be *seen* with you all. (A look to Little J)

LITTLE J
(picking up the ball)
Father Time, that sir is a *fine* idea. A black town... Huh I bet they're going to *love* me there.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEMANVILLE - DAY

Freemanville is a poor but thriving black township still under construction. A sense of common purpose fills the air with townspeople buzzing through the streets.

Freemanville's Sheriff CARVER - the man from Jessie's earlier flash - speaks with ALEX in front of Alex's home. Like Jessie, the last five years have taught Carver a few hard lessons. Physically impressive and morally unquestionable, Carver strives to keep the peace in a moral landscape that is far from perfect.

Alex's home looks like it's seen better times - the front window is smashed and scorch marks, like from torches, run up the front. Carver consoles Alex and his wife RANEY with strength and sincere tenderness. Next to Carver is his Deputy/Lackey IZZY, a heavily lidded young who's no faster in thought than he is in motion.

ALEX
I can't take anymore Carver.

67

CARVER
I know how you feel. Personally, I want to blast those bastards to Kingdom come. But (a beat) my powers are limited. Still, you can't let 'em scare you, intimidate you out of the home you worked for, we all worked for.

ALEX
I know, I know but I got a family.

CARVER
I can have Izzy here keep an eye out on your place. But (disgusted) don't really see what good *that's* going to do.

RANEY
We appreciate it but...

CARVER
You're dead set on leaving?

Alex nods.

CARVER
Well, then I think I can help you out, get you and your family some money...by buying your deed. You don't have any use for it if your leaving.

ALEX
Thanks Carver, that'd be mighty kind of you.

Patting Alex on the back, Carver heads away. Izzy trailing listlessly in his footsteps.

Looking across the street, Carver spots LANA. Put simply, she's a knockout. Her heritage is half black, half Indian, with all the mysteries that exotic combination could produce evident in her proud beauty. JOSEPH, a ten year old urchin who's carries Lana's grocery parcels from CABLE'S MARKET.

CARVER
Izzy, you run along now.

With a roll of his eyes, Izzy disappears. Carver takes off at a trot toward Lana.

CARVER
Afternoon Lana, need any help?

68

JOSEPH
(gruff)
I got 'em. (under his breath) Piss off.

LANA
Best to let the boy earn his nickel, don't you think Carver?

CARVER
Yes indeed. Well, can I just follow you around, like when we were kids, and stare. Swear to God you get lovelier every day.

LANA
(laughing)
You Carver Fields, are one very charming man.

Joseph sticks out his tongue in disgust.

CARVER
Thank you... How's Papa Joe.

LANA
Good, well old... but good. S'funny you mention him, he was asking about you yesterday.

CARVER
Papa Joe? What he say?

LANA
Let's see, as I recall Daddy said, (changes her voice to a gruff croak) What the hell's that sonofabitch up to, ain't seen him scratchin around here lately" or something like that.

Lana laughs at her father's long standing hatred of Carver. Carver joins in albeit half heartedly.

LANA
(motioning over her shoulder)
How's Alex?

CARVER
(concerned)
Scared, he and Laney thinking of leaving.

69

LANA
Can't say I blame with all the goings on lately. Town seems like a magnet for trouble.

CARVER
Don't see any surprise in that, lotta folk don't want us to thrive, don't want to believe colored's can live - and - flourish on their own. Still thinking we need our masters to think for us.

LANA
You starting to sound like King David more and more.

CARVER
(flattered)
He was a great man. It's a damn shame that...

Carver stops mid-sentence, his and Lana's eyes catch...

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

Jessie, Obobo, Little J and Weezie ride into town in the classic gunfighter tradition - their clothes dusty, looks of mean determination on their faces. Jessie's eyes are eating up the town in silent wonder.

From the porch of his market, CABLE a burly, good-natured older black man with an expansive smile looks at the gunslingers with a mix of fear and envy. His wife SADIE, appears at his elbow bringing him inside with a look of disapproval.

The town banker SNOPES, a tightly wound and severe man, notes the newcomers like the appearance of gathering storm clouds. Next to him an Indian man, TWO BELLS stares with aknowledgement of an old friend.

From an upper window at the Inn, PHOEBE - half Earth Mother, half madam - gazes with a smile that borders on a leer.

JOSEPH
Them's gunfighters I know it.

LANA
You shush.

70

The quartet posts the horses in front of the Inn. The men file in, Jessie first then Weezie and the others

LANA
(softly)
Sweet Jesus... you see who I see.

Joseph bolts toward the outlaws, enthralled. A strange look crosses Carver's face, then a smile builds. He trots after Joseph.

CARVER
C'mon Lana. C'mon it's Jessie.

LANA
(playful, sexy but something's working in her head)
Naah, ain't the time or the place. You tell him come up and see me when he's done with his big bad prodigal gunfighter homecoming.

CARVER
Alright.

LANA
Also Carver...

CARVER
(turning)
Yeah?

LANA
(dead serious)
You tell him to watch himself. I mean it. Lotta long memories around here... specially when it comes to *him*.

CARVER
(a beat) Yeah I know.

EXT. FREEMANVILLE INN - DAY

The little boy comes upon Obobo, staring up at the big man's hulking frame. His eye catches on Little J's white face. Scared, Joseph runs away. Little J's amazed.

71

OBOBO
(to Little J with a laugh)
We best get you inside, you scarin' the locals

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - DAY

DILSEY, pretty young black girl is at the relatively empty bar as the men stride in, Little J in the rear. The bar's few patrons take in the sight with curiosity and unease.

OBOBO
My my my...(staring at the sea of black faces) this is heaven. Whisky for my friends and your finest set of rooms.

Dilsey nervously sets up a bottle of rye and three glasses. Obobo, Little J and Weezie fill their glasses and down them. The Whisky hits Weezie so hard he gasps. Jessie remains silent in the shadows.

DILSEY
Whisky's a dime but we ain't got no open rooms.

WEEZIE
(gesturing to Little J)
You mean you don't cater to (a whisper) *them?*

DILSEY
No... no I'm gonna have to talk to Doubletree. (she moves to the back of the bar)

Big and seriously badass, DOUBLETREE built the Inn himself and he's not about to take any nonsense in his place. Also there ain't much on heaven or earth that puts a shiver down Doubletree's back. Doubletree steps up to the boys.

DOUBLETREE
Now see here, I sure appreciate your business boys but I'm not in the habit of providing rooms to rough trade.

LITTLE J
(only half joking)
Mister, you got no idea how rough it could get.

72

OWNER
Son, that's just the...

As the scene gets tense, Jessie steps from the shadows.

JESSIE
Afternoon Doubletree. (scanning the room) Looks like you've done well for yourself

OWNER
(shocked,wary but there's a hint of a smile)
Jessie! You still alive?

JESSIE
Last time I checked.

The owner slides a key to Jessie.

Jessie smiles at Doubletree and stuffs a wad of currency into his shirt pocket. Taking a table, Jessie sits stretching his legs, gunfighter style - back to the wall.

At the bar Weezie drains his glass and coughs horribly like his guts are being ripped apart by the whisky.

WEEZIE
(playing tough through tearing eyes.
Ack...smooth..

Obobo, Little J and a group of hangers-on erupt in laughter.

Carver appears in the doorway. A wide smile on his face, he crosses to Jessie's table.

CARVER
What this, feet up on the table? What? You born in a barn? Come to think of it... you were.

JESSIE
Yeah, and so were you.

CARVER
Nope I'm pretty sure I got birthed in an open field, Master thought a barn was a luxury.

JESSIE
How are ya Carver...

74

CARVER
(lifting his glass)
Alright Jessie, alright. How you like the town.

JESSIE
Like it just fine, so far. How the people doing?

CARVER
Fine. Just fine. (a beat, becoming official) Look Jessie, I hate to tell you this...

Jessie gives Carver a wary stare: "Are you going to arrest me?"

CARVER
(a quick smile)
But Lana told me to tell you to visit her.

JESSIE
Lana... Are you?

CARVER
No questions, no past, no future Jessie. Just two old friends having a drink...

Jessie gives Carver's last words a baleful eye.

CARVER
(cont.)
... or two.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DUSK

The workers gone, a butterfly hovers over the railroad track. A shotgun blast obliterates it.

Parker holsters his sawed-off. The Iron Brigade presses on relentlessly.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - DUSK

At the bar Obobo has Phoebe on one hand and a bottle in the other. Drunk out of his mind, Weezie has his face buried in the canyon-like cleavage of FLO - a gigantic (as in *huge*) woman.

73

The two clasp hands warmly. Carver's sheriff star catching Jessie's eye as he sits down.

CARVER
Look around Jessie, we built it! We built your Daddy's town so I guess I'm doing real good.

JESSIE
(nodding to the star)
Yeah, see you're also the law.

CARVER
Hell, Jessie. I ain't particularly fond of the job myself. Unless you want it...(makes to grab for the badge) Shit, you probably better at it than me.

There's a beat, then both men laugh a little.

CARVER
(cont.)
Yeah, I'm the Sheriff. And how bout you? Army let you out?

As the words escape his mouth, Carver instantly regrets them.

JESSIE
Not exactly Carver. Not exactly.

CARVER
You runnin from the law?

JESSIE
Couldn't really call them the law neither. Tell you what Carver, it's all a mighty long story. I live through the next couple days, I'll tell you about it.

CARVER
Jessie you're not here to...

JESSIE
(nods) Sheriff Dick... Carver...let's just pretend we're just two old friends having a drink. No past, no future just a drink here and now. Be a lot simpler and a lot less painful.

75

WEEZIE
It's alright, I'm alright, I'm alright. (looking up at Flo) You're bee-yoo-tee-full...

In a corner of the Inn, Little J is doing what he does best hustling cards. He's shuffling, starting up a game.

LITTLE J
The game's poker, which I'm sure you boys know...

A newcomer to the table interrupts him.

FATHER TIME
You fellows mind if I join you?

LITTLE J
(a glint in his eye)
Not at all my man. not at all.

Jessie, sitting a ways away, smiles as the two men run their. With the sky darkening outside, Jessie tosses a quick look to Obobo and walks out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - DUSK

Jessie passes in front of Cable's where the store owner has Joseph by the collar, a pilfered apple still in the kid's hand. Jessie flashes Cable a nasty look.. The kid is let go and sent on his way with a pat on the head.

CUT TO:

INT. CARVER'S OFFICE - DUSK

Slightly amused at the petty infraction, Carver watches Jessie walk toward Lana's.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Outside of Freemanville, Lana's house sits perched on a small hill. PAPA JOE - Lana's father, a crusty, old time badass - is smoking his pipe. A twig snaps, whip-fast the old man draws an ancient but well kept Colt and trains it off to his side.

PAPA JOE
You gettin sloppy Jessie, don't you 'member nothin' I taught ya?

Jessie appears on the porch Fluidly, Papa Joe holsters his sidearm and hugs Jessie warmly.

JESSIE
All of it. Papa Joe. (eyes an apple tree laden with fruit) Especially the hard stuff. You still practicin?

Papa Joe smiles, quick draws and shoots. An apple explodes on the tree. Papa Joe looks pissed.

PAPA JOE
God damn it!. Hands shakin' a bit. Getting old's a terrible thing. You do it.

Fast, but unhurried, Jessie draws and shoots at the apple tree. An apple, whole and undamaged, drops into a basket under the tree. Excited Papa Joe claps his hands. A voice, low and soothing sails through the air.

LANA
Jessie, you still showin' off?

Jessie turns and sees Lana, radiant but a little distant.

JESSIE
Lana! Time's been good to you.

Papa Joe smiles, there's still an amazing amount of heat between Jessie and Lana.

LANA
Last five years been nothing but hard work, can't see how that can hurt anyone. Takes a lot to build a town.

JESSIE
(gazing down into Freemanville)
I... been hearing about this since I was a little kid.

PAPA JOE
King David would be proud.

LANA
Yeah, and scared. (a beat) Jessie, we both know you coming back gonna mean trouble. Only question is for who and how much?

JESSIE
Figure for Sheriff Dick and a whole lot.

PAPA JOE
Time's changed a bit Jessie. I ain't saying Dick ain't a piece of shit. Only he don't bother us so much anymore. Got ourselves new trouble and God help us they might be worse. Least Dick's kind of evil has a face.

Jessie looks questioningly.

LANA
You know about the Ku Klux Klan?

JESSIE
Know they ain't too fond of coloreds.

LANA
Well, they *really* upset with the idea of a colored town. They been riding in shooting up the place and raising all kind of hell. Then they just fade away. People getting scared, a few families even give up, moved away. It's spooky.

JESSIE
Sounds a little familiar too.

A sober silence descends on the trio.

PAPA JOE
Lana tell me, you riding with some others. Says they look pretty rough.

JESSIE
Most of em soldiers, they're good men.

PAPA JOE
(a beat)
Lana say you riding with a cracker...

LANA
Daddy!

JESSIE
Little J's a good man. Scrappy, shoots good... *hell* of a card player.

78

PAPA JOE
(a gleam in his eye)
Hmmm. Been a while since I played against someone good. He got money?

JESSIE
Lots.

The sun fades out over the twinkling lights of Freemanville.

LANA
Walk with me Jessie Lee.

The old lovers stroll off the porch. Sensing the climate in the air, Papa Joe calls out after them.

PAPA JOE
Jessie! Lana! Figure I'm gonna go down, check on that cracker shark of yours.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

At the card table, Father Time is shuffling with superhuman dexterity. Both he and Little J sport medium size piles of winnings. The other players - including Cable - are looking a little unhappy.

LITTLE J
God Damn! What'd you say your name was again.

FATHER TIME
Father Time... cause

CABLE
(with annoyance)
"...we can stay at this table for eternity and a day and ain't*nobody* gonna beat Father Time."

LITTLE J
(a quick smile)
That is nobody but me.

At another table, Obobo and Phoebe are curled up with each other cozily. Weezie, in a fetal curl, rests in Flo's mammoth lap.

PHOEBE
Mister Obobo you certainly know how to show a lady a good time.

OBOBO
Sweetheart, you ain't seen nothing yet.

FLO
Lady? (the table erupts in laughter, Weezie's head rolls from Flo's heaving bosom) Oh, Big Man I think your little friend done passed out on me.

OBOBO
Tell you what... (hands her some money) You take him up stairs, put him to bed. When he wakes up, you tell him he was terrific. Tell him he did just fine.

Again, Flo first, the table cracks up.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jessie and Lana walk side by side through the apple grove.

JESSIE
(shaking his head)
Papa Joe, he still is something.

LANA
Yeah, if only we could figure out *what*.

JESSIE
He's always been a good man.

LANA
Since Momma died, he been both mother and father to me. And then... since King David... died and you had to go away... it's just been me and him.

JESSIE
What about a husband?

LANA
(a fiery look in her eye)
Thought about it. Sometimes I think about it a lot. Problem is, pickings are slim.

JESSIE
Slim? For you?

LANA
Oh there's men, suitors, but they want too little. You know a wife for cooking and bedding and that's about it. There's one though...

JESSIE
Can't see what's so bad about cookin' and beddin'

LANA
(stopping, her eyes thoughtful, electric)
Oh ain't nothin wrong with the bedding part...

The lovers embrace.

LANA
(cont.)
It's the cooking I can't stand.

Their embrace becomes more passionate.

LANA
Oh Carver!

Shocked and a little angry Jessie rears back and looks at Lana questioningly. She's got him. With a laugh, she tears off up the hill. Jessie follows.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

Flo carries Weezie up the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - NIGHT

Papa Joe strolls the warm night air.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPRING POOL - NIGHT

Jessie comes to a spring, more like an oasis, actually. Lana is nowhere to be seen. Creepy. There's a small sound, Jessie whirls.... just in time to see Lana barreling toward him. With a splash, the lovers land in the water.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

Father Time laughs - deep and low - and slides another pile of winnings toward himself.

FATHER TIME
Tick, tock, tick, tock...

Slowly, a little bit worse for wear, Obobo rises with Phoebe. They head for the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - NIGHT

Papa Joe approaches the center of town. There's a sound. The low thrumming of horses hooves.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

The sound of horses builds (over) as Lana and Jessie make love in the shimmering water.

EXT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

Carrying torches, loud and violent, the NIGHT RIDERS - seven men in KKK regalia - burst from the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

The patrons react to the eruption outside with panic and screams. Obobo, Little J, Doubletree and Father Time however are on their feet.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

A rider makes to throw a torch through the Inn's front window. Another rider stops him, motioning to the residence across the street. The rider whirls and throws.

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - NIGHT

The torch sails by Papa Joe and through the window. Carver can be seen running down the street toward the Inn.

CUT TO:

82

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Jessie and Lana's passion fades as moonlight dapples the water.

EXT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

The riders fly past the Inn like malevolent ghosts, heading out of town. Obobo and Little J both draw a bead on the retreating forms. Triggers are cocked.

A Smith & Wesson presses against Obobo's temple.

CARVER
That's the easy way - gunning a man down. Here in Freemanville, we take a harder road - peace.

The edge in Carver's voice stops the gunslingers cold.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

At the shore, Lana and Jessie sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET FREEMANVILLE - NIGHT

A tight group of townspeople, including Papa Joe and Joseph, put out the fire. Outside, a young black woman, SARAH, holds her two BABIES, tears streaming down her cheeks. This building was her home.

PAPA JOE
Bastards! Running this town into the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK ROAD - FREEMANVILLE - NIGHT

One lone rider races out of town, we can't see who he is but he's in a big hurry.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CUTTER'S TOWN - NIGHT

A group of white men are taking off their hoods and robes One of them is easily recognizable, SHERIFF DICK,the key figure in Jessie's nightmares. His fleshy lips are wet with chewing tobacco.

SHERIFF DICK
Good work boys. God damn but a little dress-up sure puts the fear of God in them. Won't belong before than town fulla ghosts... instead of spooks.

His men laugh at the joke as if on command. Another man, strong, redneck looking, walks in, his robe still on. It's DEPUTY TOM - another rider from the past.

DEPUTY TOM
(jerking his head toward the back)
You got company.

The fat man moves toward the back of the office.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sheriff Dick walks out into the darkness.

SHERIFF DICK
(spits a jet of tobacco)
You out there?

A distinctive voice we've never heard before responds.

VOICE
Yeah. Look, we got trouble...

SHERIFF DICK
What you mean trouble..

VOICE
Jessie Lee... he's back.

The Sheriff lets the words wash over him. He works the plug in his mouth, his thoughts racing.

VOICE
(cont.)
He's gonna be coming after you.

SHERIFF DICK
He got men?

VOICE
Came in with three. Two blacks, one a kid skinny, one's *real* big. And a white guy, arm in a bandage.

SHERIFF DICK
(sarcastic)
Humph, ol Jessie turning positively free-thinking.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Charged, Sheriff Dick strides into his office and addresses his men.

SHERIFF DICK
Boys, we going back to Freemanville.

A mild cheer goes up. Deputy Tom puts his hood up.

SHERIFF DICK
Unh uh. Ain't no need for the Halloween costume. (Hangs his robe up) This time we goin in on *official* business.

Sheriff Dick pins a shiny star onto his chest. The others follow suit, trading robes for stars and torches for Winchesters.

CUT TO:

INT. RED LODGE - NIGHT

Sheriff Dick and his men make a martial entrance into this tough, seedy Cutter's Town bar.

SHERIFF DICK
Listen up! Natives getting a little restless over in that there Free-man-ville. Figure I'm gonna be needin a couple strong men, case they all need a lesson. Anybody wanna have a little fun? Five bucks a piece?

A bunch of cowboys join the Sheriff. While his friends go, a rough looking man, ABEL, stays by his beer.

SHERIFF DICK
What's keepin ya Abel? I know you could use the monsy and... hell, I *know* you ain't scared.

ABEL
Ain't scared. it just ain't right you bothering them people.

With a disgusted snort, Sheriff Dick heads out the door.

EXTT. POOL - NIGHT

In the dim calm light, Jessie tosses, turns. He is DREAMING.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - 1887 - NIGHT

Jessie hand in hand with Lana watches King David addressing a crowd. The only sound is the thunderous basso of his voice.

KING DAVID LEE
And I say the time has come. The time for every *free* man... black as well as white to build his Kingdom. *Our* kingdom, built with *our* hands, showing *our* pride. Our Kingdom will be a monument to our nobility and our labors. We shall not wait. The time is now, brothers and sisters... *The time is now...*

The sound of horses' hooves drowns out the last of the preacher's words.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - 1892 - NIGHT

Sheriff Dick and his men ride.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

Done cleaning up the mess, the townspeople including Doubletree, Papa Joe, Obobo and Little J queue up at the bar - dirty and worn - to quench their thirst. Still following the scam, Father Time keeps his distance.

PAPA JOE
Bastards! White trash throw a sheet over his head, think he can come in and scare the piss out of decent folks.

DOUBLETREE
Lucky all they burnin is crosses. Wasn't so long ago they was torchin *men*.

PAPA JOE
I know. I know

86

LITTLE J
Obobo?

OBOBO
Yeah?

LITTLE J
That raid. If you could call it that, seem strange to you?

OBOBO
Not sure what you mean.

LITTLE J
(off in thought)
Me neither.

Little J's musings are cut short when Sheriff Dick and his men enter with a swagger. Little J reaches for his pistol. Doubletree's hand on his shoulder stops him.

SHERIFF
Evening gents. Hear you all had some trouble again tonight. Wish I could help you, honestly I do but... well I got other fish to fry.

Dick strides down the bar, his men flanked out behind him, rifles bristling out like deadly spines.

SHERIFF DICK
Seems we got some "undesirable elements" among us. (a nod) Him...

Swift, two Winchesters train on Obobo. He is roughly taken into custody.

SHERIFF DICK
(another nod) Him... Boy, you stand out something fierce in this crowd.

Three deputies grab Little J banging his injured arm in the process. Father Time rises defensively from his seat. A sharp look from Little J sits him back down again.

PAPA JOE
Now wait just a god damn minute here. You can't just drag men out of this here establishment.

SHERIFF DICK
Papa Joe, that you? Well, shut my mouth. Matter of fact, yes I can . I'm in the course of hunting down a fugitive from justice. Maybe you know where he is? How about it, Papa Joe, you seen Jessie Lee lately?

Angry and tough as a coyote, Papa Joe clamps his mouth shut with an audible snap.

SHERIFF DICK
Lemme ask again. Any of you *upstanding* citizens of Free-man-ville seen one Jessie David Lee?

All eyes avert the Sheriff's gaze.

SHERIFF DICK
Well then, it does pain me but I guess we have to resort to less civilized methods...

Four deputies bring Obobo up in front of Sheriff Dick.

SHERIFF DICK
I'm only gonna ask you nice once. Where's Jessie Lee at?

OBOBO
I don't know what you're talking about.

Sheriff Dick punches Obobo in the stomach. Hard.

SHERIFF DICK
Like I said, only gonna ask once. (to Deputy Tom). Your turn.

Deputy Tom, slips gloves on his hands and smashes Obobo in the face. Once. Twice. The Sheriff smiles at the onlookers, his men covering them

SHERIFF DICK
Let this be a lesson in cooperation to y'all.

Doubletree's face is pure hate and terror. Little J struggles to break free.

CUT TO:

88

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Awakened by Jessie's troubled sleep, Lana watches him with concern.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

His nose and mouth running blood, Obobo takes another brutal punch to the face.

SHERIFF DICK
So, again, where is he?

OBOBO
(Spitting blood)
A...again... I don't know who you talking about.

SHERIFF DICK
(a sick smile on his face)
Oh come on now. People seen you come in with him? You tell me you gonna take a beating, maybe even worse for that piece of shit.

OBOBO
Fuck you.

Tom lays into Obobo brutally, body punches so hard you can hear ribs crack.

Little J can't take it any more, his good hand drops , touching the knife at the belt of the man who's holding him.

In one swift, all or nothing motion, Little J grabs the knife, slashing a huge gash in the thigh of the man behind him. He then throws himself straight toward Deputy Tom, his knife sticking in the deputy's shoulder. The momentum of Little J's attack takes both men straight through the Inn's window.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - NIGHT

The crash wakes Flo and Weezie. Weezie stares at the huge woman, petrified.

89

WEEZIE
Oh God!!!

FLO
Shhh. Look!

The unlikely couple gaze out the window and see...

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - NIGHT

Little J has landed in a roll and, unsteadily, runs away from the Inn. Around the town lights are coming on, people are watching.

CUT TO:

The Sheriff and his men stream out of the Inn, the townspeople following. Papa Joe makes a break for it, loping painfully down the street.

SHERIFF DICK
Papa Joe! Grab him!

One deputy is all it takes to grab and hold the old man. However, the lawman does get a nasty kick in the shins for his pains.

Easily catching up with Little J, the other deputies begin beating him. Like a cornered mongoose, Little J fights back with ferocity and skill unmatched by any one of his assailants.

Unfortunately, Little is horribly outnumbered and the wiry man is soon down, defenseless. The deputies continue - literally kicking him to death. Every window in town is lit up, on the porches of Freemanville people are watching the insane brutality.

Obobo rises to the sound of the violence outside. He takes one step forward before a rifle butt to the head drops him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARVER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Carver trots toward the commotion, stopping short as he sees...

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - NIGHT

Little J's mangled corpse lies in the dirt. Standing above it, the Sheriff spits a jet of tobacco spittle on the body.

90

SHERIFF DICK
God damn nigger lover.

Sheriff Dick notices the townspeople staring from their porches. Doubletree is looking straight at him with an expression of rage and horror.

SHERIFF DICK
What the hell you lookin' at? Get back inside, you ain't seen nothin'

Not a single townsperson moves. Joseph is staring at the scene wide-eyed. Enraged, Carver approaches the Sheriff.

CARVER
What the hell do you think you're doing (points to Papa Joe) You let that man go!!!...

SHERIFF
(backhanding Carver, a rise goes up into the crowd)
Shut up. Ain't no nigger ever gonna tell me what to do. (looking around, assessing the situation) Bobby, get the horses.

One of the deputies scoots off quickly. Carver is staring at the Sheriff with murder in his eyes and his hand on his gun.

SHERIFF DICK
Do it, Carver. Do it.

With unbelievable effort, Carver takes his hand away.

SHERIFF DICK
(whirling on the crowd)
I said GET BACK INSIDE!!!

The townspeople aren't going anywhere.

SHERIFF DICK
I don't know what's going through your monkey heads, but I *am* in control here. Not Carver, not Jessie Lee. You listen and you listen good. Tomorrow, I'm comin back with more men and more guns than you ever seen. I want Jessie here! Right here, dead or alive.

The deputy arrives with the horses. Obobo is thrown over one like a sack of flour, same with Papa Joe. The Sheriff,

red faced furious at his lack of control of the situation, mounts.

SHERIFF
Don't worry about these two. They'll get a *fair trial* tomorrow - same as Jessie Lee.

Joseph tears off down the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

There's the sound of horses (over). Jessie wakes with a start, panicked, sweating.

LANA
Jessie baby, calm down. It's alright.

Jumping to his feet, Jessie starts gathering his things.

JESSIE
No... I gotta go.

LANA
Jessie, ain't you got no time for peace?

JESSIE
Far as I can tell, this world ain't got no peace.

Picking up his things Jessie's catches sight of his own reflection in his father's shiny bible.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dressed, Jessie comes to the porch, Lana three steps behind him. It takes a second, but Lana notices that all the lights in Freemanville are on.

LANA
Strange...

VOICE
(over)
Lana...

Joseph appears from the shadows, tears streaming down his face. Jessie, followed by Lana and the boy, moves toward Freemanville.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEMANVILLE INN - NIGHT

Weezie - for the first time experiencing what a gunslinger's life *really* means - stands over Little J's brutalized body. Father Time, his icy veneer cracked with emotion, leans over Little J's body.

FATHER TIME
(softly)
You had a lot of guts. Played your hand out to the end.

Every nearby eye turns.

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - NIGHT

Jessie strides toward Little J's body, Lana and Joseph behind him. Nearby, Carver is nursing a bleeding mouth

CARVER
Now, Jessie don't go do anything crazy. This is a peaceful town.

Jessie leans over pick up Little J's body.

JESSIE
This ain't peaceful. (looks around)

A murmur of assent ripples through the crowd. Lana looks around for her father.

CARVER
Jessie... I.. didn't... None of us wanted this to happen.

JESSIE
(gently lifting Little J's corpse)
Well, it happened (he raises his voice to the crowd) Now you gotta think about what you're gonna do.

CARVER
(wary)
And you.

JESSIE
(softly)
I *know* what I'm gonna do.

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Jessie, Little J in his arms, walks calmly down the main street. Weezie and Father Time follow him with Joseph bringing up the very rear.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Lana runs down the street, frantically.

LANA
Daddy? Daddy!

DOUBLETREE
They took him, Lana. Sheriff Dick took him on to Cutter's Town.

The words hit Lana like a blow.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Outside Jessie finishes a grave, silently. We hear Jessie's theme (over) Weezie, Father Time and Lana are at his side and Joseph - although staying near his idol - keeps a respectful distance. Jessie turns - alone - to go.

FATHER TIME
Wait a second. I'm coming too.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Deputy Tom tends to his shoulder, a Winchester sitting across his desk.

OBOBO
(claustrophobic,pure evil)
Let me out or I swear to God I'll see you dead.

DEPUTY TOM
(wincing in pain)
Ah! Shut up in there or I ain't gonna wait till morning... Ah!

The door opens, 3 men dressed in KKK regalia move into the room.

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DEPUTY
Well, now boys... (a nod) Sheriff? Didn't think we'd need the Halloween outfits for this... it being "official business" and all.

The lead KKK man jerks a thumb toward the cell.

DEPUTY
(a graveyard smile)
Now you know I can't do that. I can't let you... vigilantes put this man into custody but .. (opens the cell and turns away).

The KKK men grab Obobo and Papa Joe roughly. They lead him out. Almost out the door, Obobo spits on Deputy Tom. Incensed Tom grabs for his rifle. The first KKK stops him.

DEPUTY TOM
What the hell's wrong with you?

Tom sees black skir through the eyeholes of the hood.

For an instant, Jessie flashes on Tom on horseback from the nightmares.

Tom raises the Winchester and, one handed, gets off a shot at Jessie. Jessie shoots twice and drops the deputy. Heading out the door, he sees a MAP on the wall.- the "PR" logo resting right next to the word "Freemanville."

CUT TO:

EXT. DIABLO PASS - NIGHT

Jessie and the others lead their horses through a narrow pass that cuts through the mountains near Diablo Plains. It's eerie, the wind makes strange noises against the jagged rocks.

LANA
Daddy you sure we're in the right place?

PAPA JOE
(disoriented)
Well uh, been a long time but I'm pretty sure.

A few moments go by as the posse gets its bearings

FATHER TIME
(interrupting, a strange timbre to his voice)
Uh... I'd say we're definitely in the right place.

From out of the shadows INDIANS appear on all sides of the party. TWO BELLS, from Freemanville, is with them.

TWO BELLS
Do not be frightened.

JESSIE
(smiling recognizing his friend)
Two bells.

CUT TO:

INT. GREY EYES' TENT - NIGHT

Jessie sits at a fire in the center of the old Indian's tent. The others are nearby. GREY EYES - an Apache elder, Jessie's known since childhood - speaks. His voice is flat and toneless, like the wind whistling through ancient rocks.

GREY EYES
... And it was decided that the people, the First People would keep their land. We would stay and live as we had since the beginning. The white man and his people understood or so we thought. There was tenderness to their way with the First People. They gave us blankets during one particularly cold winter. In spring, we discovered the blankets had been infected with smallpox...

FATHER TIME
Jesus.

GREY EYES
(cont.)
Weakened and scared, our great chiefs dead. The first people's spirit was shattered - we knew our time had passed. And so, the land was left...

LANA
Your land, your ancestor's land...

GREY EYES
Not our land, we do not inherit the land from our fathers we borrow it from our children... As you do... For now the First People's time is passing, your people's is only beginning.

JESSIE
I remember my father used to visit you near the Plains, Diablo Plains.

GREY EYES
Yes, King David was a wise and gentle man. (a beat) But his life was but a preparation, a lesson.. It is too late to save your father. Now you must rescue your mother.

JESSIE
My mother.

GREY EYES
The land.

WEEZIE
Weird.

PAPA JOE
How in the hell you expect us to stand up for our land when we got the Sheriff and all them Cutter's town folks running all over us like a steam locomotive!

The words "steam locomotive" strike Jessie hard. He has an fast intense flash: The last rider's head is turning, turning, we cannot see his face but we see that the last rider is a BLACK MAN. Next, Jessie's sees the burnt Indian Village and the Pacific Railroad sign from the desert Then the PR logo next to Freemanville. The sequence ends with the last rider's head turning again, still obscured.

A moment of thought passes, then wordlessly, Jessie rises and leaves the tent.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIABLO PASS - NIGHT

Among the small battered tents, Jessie prepares to mount up. The rest of the posse join him.

JESSIE
(to Obobo Father Time and Weezie)
This is where our roads part.

WEEZIE
No.. Unh uh. You *know* what happens when we split up.

FATHER TIME
Hear the man out little brother, hear the man out.

Obobo eyes are liquid pools of childlike incomprehension

OBOBO
But Little J...

JESSIE
This isn't about Little J. It's about Freemanville, the town. Keeping my father's dream alive... or dying trying. Ain't no use you dyin for something that ain't yours.

WEEZIE
But we're *partners*...

JESSIE
(a smile)
Maybe but... How old are you Weezie.

WEEZIE
Nineteen.

JESSIE
Nineteen. Well, you ready to die tomorrow cause that's probably what's going to happen.

WEEZIE
(a new confidence)
Okay, but well, I guess it would depend.

FATHER TIME
I for one am not. You're a good man Jessie but I don't see no real profit in a bloodbath.

OBOBO
Jessie, you know it don't make no difference to me.

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JESSIE
That's why you gotta go. You stay, you're gonna die and I can't have that on my conscience.

OBOBO
(pointing to Papa Joe, Lana and Joseph)
But you gonna take an old man, a woman and a child to fight.

JESSIE
Yeah, what we're fighting for is theirs most of all. You know like in the Bible, David and Goliath.

Obobo looks away.

OBOBO
Can't read.

Jessie hands the gentle giant his father's shiny bible.

JESSIE
Well, then you better start practicing. (mounts up along with Lana and Joseph). You follow this ridge it'll take you to the Dakota Territories. You're good men you deserve better times than these.

FATHER TIME
Ah hell, they'll do.

Jessie and his unlikely companions ride off as Obobo, Father Time and Weezie look on, overcome. Obobo gazes at his simple reflection in the bible.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The town meeting is in progress in the old, musty space. Carver, with Izzy watching nearby, is at the pulpit addressing the confused, angry populace.

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CARVER
I know you're angry. I know you're mad. I know you want to yell. Destroy. Take matters into your own hands. But that's anger talking and all anger ever does is tear things down. It's the tool of weak men, men like Sheriff Dick. We've built something here. Something good. Something that's ours. And I don't see how one man is worth losing it all. You all know the Sheriff. You think he's gonna think twice about sending this all up in flames.

The crowd roars, venting common rage. .

SNOPES
Yeah, we been keepin' the peace. Nothin like this happened before. Before Jessie came. Besides that man... he wasn't one of us.

A chorus of consenting and dissenting voices comes up. The meeting's turning into chaos.

JESSIE
(over)
THAT'S RIGHT, HE WASN'T ONE OF US. CAUSE HE WAS WHITE!

The assembly turns, Jessie stands in the doorway, tall, proud. The crowd falls silent.

JESSIE
But that man stood up for himself. Have you?

Murmurs come up from the crowd.

CARVER
This is your battle not ours.

JESSIE
If Sheriff Dick can beat a man to death in the middle of the road, in plain sight. A *white* man. What's that mean for us?

The crowd pauses, then responds with an angry roar. Both sides of the issue are getting heated.

SARAH
But it just ain't worth it.

JESSIE
Some people would like you to think that. But think about this - you give me up and I hang tomorrow. That any guarantee that them Night Riders ain't gonna come back tomorrow night? Oh yeah, they gonna be back cause someone wants your land and that someone ain't an outsider, ain't a white man. He's one of us.

Carver and Izzy slip out a side door.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANA'S ROOM - DAWN

Jessie has his weapons prepared, laid out on the bed. He slips them on effortlessly. On the porch, Lana is cleaning a shotgun, while Papa Joe sights in his old pistols. Joseph regards the scene with childlike awe.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - DAWN

Doubletree fixes up roughly two dozen molotov cocktails on the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF DICK'S OFFICE - DAWN

Like a content fat frog, the sheriff sits, feet up on a desk. In the background two men are carrying away the body of Deputy Tom. Carver bursts in winded, scared. Izzy following slowly behind.

SHERIFF DICK
Morning Carver. What has you up so early.

CARVER
First off, I didn't appreciate that bullshit last night.

SHERIFF DICK
Sorry for the slap.

CARVER
I'm talking about that boy, the one you stomped. *That* wasn't in the plan. You got the whole town with a lizard up its ass.

SHERIFF DICK
(a shrug)
Boys got out of hand. That man was resisting.

IZZY
Yeah, but the big problem's Jessie. He knows.

Izzy's distinctive voice is easily recognizable from his earlier meeting with Dick.

SHERIFF DICK
Knows what?

CARVER
(frustrated)
Knows that we been scaring people out of Freemanville so's to buy up the land before the railroad comes through.

SHERIFF DICK
So what, he knows.

Carver stands there amazed at Dick's demeanor.

SHERIFF DICK
(cont.)
See, Carver, we ain't the only people that got Jessie as a thorn in our side.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAWN

With a labored, limping gait, two boots - so shiny they hurt the eyes appear.

SHERIFF DICK
Carver, I'd like you to meet Colonel Graham.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(the most courteous bow)
Believe me it's my pleasure- any friend of Jessie's is a friend of mine.

EXT. MAIN ROAD - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

CUT TO:

The sun burns bright in the sky over the small town. Freemanville lies silent, ghostly, the air heavy with tension.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ROAD - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

Sheriff Dick, Colonel Graham, twenty-five well armed white lawmen and the Iron Brigade enter the town. In the middle of the posse is a wagon, its contents covered with a tarp. The miniature army comes to a stop in front of the Inn.

SHERIFF DICK
JESSIE LEE!!! I want him here and I want him here now.

Sheriff Dick's face melts in amazement as the townspeople appear out of their doors.

SHERIFF DICK
So that's how you want it? I don't think you all understand the situation here. It's a matter of power and, ladies and gentleman, I *do* have that power. (gestures to the wagon)

A deputy on the wagon throws aside the canvas revealing a gatling gun.

SHERIFF DICK
(cont.)
And I *will* use it. So either Jessie come out or Freemanville falls down. (nods to the wagon). Show 'em what I mean.

The gatling gun opens fire on the Inn, shattering its windows, devastating its front and insides. Behind the bar bottles break, spilling their contents all over the floor. The barrage stops, all is silent.

SHERIFF
You ain't got yourselves no Inn no more. And that's just the beginning less I see Jessie Lee's black ass out here... NOW!!

The gatling gun turns to the next storefront on the street.

CUT TO:

INT. CABLE'S MARKET - DAY

Jessie Lee is inside with Papa Joe, Lana, Joseph, Doubletree and Cable. He unholsters his pistol checks it and reholsters it. A look to Joseph says, "stay here."

EXT. MAIN ROAD FREEMANVILLE -DAY

Jessie steps out from the line of townspeople on the street. He's in the middle of the road, solo, facing the Sheriff's men in the most brass-balled of gunslinger fashion.

JESSIE
Ain't no need for all that noise, Sheriff. I'm right here.

SHERIFF DICK
That you are Jessie, that you are.

JESSIE
Afternoon Colonel, figured I'd see you here.

Colonel Graham tips his hat.

COLONEL
Hello Jessie, I trust you have what rightfully belongs to me.

Jessie shrugs. The main road of Freemanville crackles with a tension that's almost electric.

JESSIE
Had it around here somewhere.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(to the gatling gunner)
Kill that piece of shit.

The gatling gun swings around quickly... Jessie moves *fast* to the side.

A shot rings out. The gatling gunner drops.

At the end of town three horses are moving in - Obobo, Weezie, Father Time.

There's is a beat, then another. Then... all hell breaks loose.

CUT TO:

Lana and Joseph dive for cover.

CUT TO:

The Sheriff's men open fire on the town.

CUT TO:

Jessie bolts to the side, his guns blazing. One... Two... Three. Four of the Sheriff's men drop from their saddles.

CUT TO:

A row of townspeople fall before a rain of Iron Brigade bullets. Coolly efficiently, they're just slaughtering anything they see.

CUT TO:

Obobo leaps off his horse and, using it as cover, moves in Search and Destroy fashion. Shooting steadily and moving toward the Sheriff and the Iron Brigade.

CUT TO:

A white lawman makes his way to the gatling gun. Just as he reaches it, a bullet takes the top of his head off.

CUT TO:

Weezie, bent low over the saddle expertly guides his horse into the fray. His hand holds a smoking pistol.

CUT TO:

Jessie, is in his element with one goal in mind. Focused and intense, his guns shoot away at the men surrounding the Sheriff.

CUT TO:

Parker dismounts fluid and deadly. A tuck and roll and he's on top of Jessie. The men grapple, then both sail through a toy store window crushing a doll house. Jessie lands hard, one of his pistols clattering to the floor, his other arm pinned. Smiling through his ruined face, Parker pulls a skinning knife. All of a sudden, a ragged hole blasts through his chest.

CUT TO:

Lana stands in the window with a smoking shotgun in her hand. Another Iron Brigadier appears behind her.

CUT TO:

Reaching behind his neck, Jessie pulls his Bowie knife, throwing it into the throat of the Iron Brigadier. He picks up his pistol and heads through the window. Where Lana is overdosing on adrenaline

JESSIE
Always watch your back.

Lana rolls her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET FREEMANVILLE - DAY

Jessie moves down the street at a good clip, firing constantly. Suddenly the window above him explodes. Jessie picks up the pace as the store fronts behind him are decimated.

CUT TO:

One of the Sheriff's men, behind the gatling gun, chases Jessie down with bullets.

CUT TO:

Jessie, does a quick flying roll under the lead rain and gets off four shots.

CUT TO:

The gunner drops dead.

CUT TO:

Obobo flashes a grin at Jessie's handiwork. Then the big man spies something through the broken window of Cable's Market... Doubletree, with a molotov cocktail.

CUT TO:

Papa Joe, tucked tight against a building, moves forward slowly, firing..

INT. BANK - DAY

In the back Carver, Izzy and Snopes are filling a valise with deeds and cash.

VOICE
(over)
You boys got the right idea.

CUT TO:

Father Time appears, smiling.

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE DAY

Weezie, still mounted, sees a path, however slight, through the fray straight toward the gatling gun.

CUT TO:

Obobo emerges from Cable's Market with a Molotov cocktail.

CUT TO:

Weezie starts his insanely brave run straight towards the gatling gun. Fast - zigzaggin - he rips along, the gatling gunner trying to get a bead on him. Suddenly, the gunner has him in his sights.

Weezie jumps the horse straight over the gun wagon. Landing almost on top of Colonel Graham. Their horses crash, dumping and disarming both riders.

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

Jessie, slowly but surely, is making progress toward the Sheriff.

CUT TO:

Colonel Graham and Weezie face each other. Weezie cracks Graham hard across the face.

GRAHAM
My my Weezie I didn't know you had it in you..(smiles)

Although, his leg's in bad shape, the Colonel is an amazing hand to hand fighter. Ruthlessly, he beats Weezie to the ground.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(drawing his calvary sword with a flourish)
Weezie, it's been fun but...

With his last reserve of strength Weezie kicks the Colonel's wounded leg The Colonel yelps with agony and stumbles as Weezie backs quickly away...

Straight into an Iron Brigadier. Weezie looks up at the killer's face with terror. Across from him, Colonel Graham is using his sword as a crutch, pointing his recovered pistol at Weezie.

COLONEL GRAHAM
Ah, I would have preferred to use the sword. It's so regal. Well, makes no difference. (to the Brigadier) Back away...

Crack! a shot rings out, dropping the Brigadier. Both the Colonel and Weezie whirl to see Jessie Lee outlined against the chaos.

COLONEL GRAHAM
(his demeanor cracking)
Jessie?

JESSIE
(gesturing around)
Glorious, huh?

Both men fire. Jessie's faster, the colonel drops dead.

JESSIE
(to Weezie, eyeing the dead Brigadier)
Watch your back.

Weezie stares slack mouthed as Jessie walks past, rejoining the fray.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

Carver smiles at Father time.

CARVER
Just making a little early withdrawal. Plenty for everybody.

Reaching down, Carver grabs a revolver sitting in his valise. Izzy draws, Father Time shoots him down. Carver whirls and shoots Father Time dead. Snopes gasps.

CARVER
(shoving the pistol into the man's face)
Shut up.

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

Jessie continues toward the Sheriff.

OBOBO
(over)
JESSIE!!!

Jessie follows the sound and sees Obobo emerging from Cable's holding a Molotov cocktail. Lighting it, Obobo rears back his hand to throw the firebomb. Boom - a shot rips through his side.

CUT TO:

Jessie stares in horror as Obobo takes a bullet.

CUT TO:

Wounded, but not bad, Obobo instinctively looks back at where the shot came from. Big mistake - the momentary distraction allows the Sheriff to get a bead on him. A bullet hits the big man's chest, knocking him backwards. Slowly, Obobo falls backwards into the alley, the live firebomb arcing out of his hand through the air...

CUT TO:

INT. CABLE'S MARKET - DAY

...and it lands right in front of Cable and Doubletree. Both dive through the window just as...

CUT TO:

EXT. CABLE'S MARKET - DAY

The building blows, blasting the men clear. Burning shards of wood fly everywhere. The building is engulfed in flames.

CUT TO:

Happy to be alive, Cable gets to his feet.. An Iron Brigadier mercilessly guns him down.

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

The concussion knocks Papa Joe into the alley. Where he lands...

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Next to Obobo, who - though wounded - still lives.

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OBOBO
(wet cough, his side bloody)
He was right.

Obobo pulls the bible from his pocket. It's dented bad but whole. He looks at his reflection in it.

OBOBO
Gonna be here when it's over.

PAPA JOE
(holding the giant)
Shhh.

VOICE
(over)
How touching.

An iron brigadier stands there his pistol trained on the two men. Papa Joe shoots insanely fast.. The Brigadier pitches forward... dead.

PAPA JOE
(looking at his perfectly steady hands)
Hmmm.

CUT TO:

Weezie's having a ball shooting the gatling gun. Blasting away, yelling. A bullet skims him. He dives under the wagon for cover.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

The fray increases with the explosion. The townspeople are gaining the upper hand.

Obobo's apparent death kicks Jessie into overdrive, he moves forward like a man possessed, his shots ringing true. The group of men around the Sheriff is dwindling.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - DAY

A tiny river of liquid from the bar runs toward and out the door of the Inn.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ROAD - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

Jessie is close now, real close. He moves toward the Sheriff. Suddenly another molotov cocktail in Cable's Market blows, the concussion knocking Jessie off his feet.

The explosion sends burning embers into the street. One lands at the foot of the Inn, igniting the liquid at the door.

CUT TO:

INT. FREEMANVILLE INN - DAY

The fire speeds down the trail of booze toward the bar.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ROAD - FREEMANVILLE - DAY

The Inn goes up in flames. One of the Iron Brigadiers is caught in the pyrotechnic, he runs blazing into the street where he falls burning, dead.

CUT TO:

Joseph and Lana stare stunned as the town begins burning.

CUT TO:

Jessie gets back on his feet. Smoke clouds the air. He shoots. Another of the Sheriff's men drops.

With the exception of the burning, the battle falls silent. The Sheriff stands alone, his troops destroyed.

SHERIFF
This how you wanted it Jessie? This your idea of a homecoming?

Jessie flashes on the sheriff, dragging his father behind his horse, his father's face bloody, screaming.

CUT TO:

The two men face each other like ancient adversaries. It's a classic showdown.

SHERIFF DICK
I should of killed you back then.

JESSIE
But now you've got to look me in the face.

Near a burning building, a half dead Iron Brigadier raises his pistol.

We see Sheriff Dick's eyes shift, his nerve isn't so steely when confronted with Jessie.

A shot rips into Jessie's leg, he drops in agony. Whirling instinctively, he sends a bullet through the Iron Brigadier's head.

The momentary distraction allows the Sheriff to get his sights on Jessie.

SHERIFF DICK
Say hi to your daddy for me.

The Sheriff's head explodes. The body drops. Behind him, Joseph holds a smoking gun, tears streaming down his face, all innocence gone. Wounded and half delirious Jessie reels at the sight.

LANA
Joseph!!!!

About to run across the street, Lana is stopped by a stern voice.

CARVER
(over)
No Lana leave him be.

Slow, merciless, Carver moves like the Devil incarnate through dissapating smoke, his Sheriff's star gleaming.. He's got a valise in one hand a revolver in the other. Stunned, Papa Joe comes into the alley, limping heavily from his fall.

Jessie raises his pistol

Carver turns to face him.

The face from the flashback turns

Carver shoots the gun out of Jessie's hand, leaving it a bloody paw.

CARVER
(walking easily, almost jauntily toward Lana)
No Jessie, we don't want to end this too soon. Lana, you come on over here now. Alright sweetheart?

Lana shrinks back repulsed.

Papa Joe takes a labored step down the street, Carver shoots him point blank, just that sudden, just that ruthless. The old man drops like a tear.

CARVER
(his face twisting into a mask of rage)
Lana you come her now, bitch!!!!

The face turns completely, it's Carver he's the last rider.

Lana runs. Carver chases her a short ways and grabs her roughly.

CARVER
See Jessie? Now everything's the way it should be. (lifting the valise) Town's mine. (Shaking Lana) Lana's mine. And you're laying in the mud. *This* is building a future.

Carver raises his arm in triumph, giving Jessie just enough time to pull his pistol from his boot. In a flash, Carver has Lana in front of him like a shield.

CARVER
(backing away, toward a horse)
Oh no no no no no. You ain't gonna shoot *me*. That's not part of the plan. You wouldn't risk hitting Lana? Then you'd be all alone Jessie. Besides she's innocent, ain't never hurt no one. (almost to the horse) You know Jessie, I woulda been a better son to him than you...

JESSIE
Ain't nobody innocent.

Jessie pulls the trigger.

A bright red blossom blooms on Carver's forehead. It's an amazing shot, possibly a one-in-ten-thousand bit of accuracy. Carver drops. The valise opens, currency and deeds scatter through the wreckage of Freemanville.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

In the battle's aftermath, what's left of the Posse gathers over Obobo's seriously wounded form - Weezie, Jessie, Lana

and Joseph. In the background Doubletree leads the townspeople in forming a bucket brigade.

OBOBO
(shakily holding out the bible)
D... Didn't nothing happen to your bible....

The bible's got a bullet mark in it and a few blood stains mar its brightness.

OBOBO
(cont.)
Leastways not inside...

JESSIE
You're going to be okay...

OBOBO
(a strange look passes his face)
Don't matter. Hundred years from now ain't nobody gonna know the difference. Jess....

JESSIE
Yeah.

OBOBO
Read to me.

As Jessie reads the twenty sixth psalm. We rise, watching the people of Freemanville dousing the fires, rebuilding. Jessie's theme builds behind the psalm.

JESSIE
Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where they honour dwelleth. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men. In whose hands is mischief and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me...

CUT TO:

INT. MUSEUM OF THE BLACK WEST - 1992 - DAY

OLD MAN
... I will walk in mine integrity, redeem me and be merciful unto me. My foot standeth in an even place... I will wash my hands in innocency.

EZ E stares at the Old Man in complete wonderment.

EZ E
That's some heavy shit...

OLD MAN
So that's what Jessie was about. You boys out there today could look at people like him. People from the past a little closer. About honor, bout doin' the right thing.

EZ E
Yeah, but things out there mighty different. See we talking today, we talking society. Ain't all crazy, wild west shit out there now. I mean shit, we may not have peace but we working on some kind of justice... I been to court enough to...

A blast of gunfire outside interrupts EZ. Pike comes running in.

PIKE
What the fuck you *still* doin in here? Ain't you heard?

EZ
Heard what?

PIKE
Them motherfuckers, them four guys that beat that brother half to death. Jury found 'em *innocent*, God damn people gonna blow this town all to hell.

EZ turns and gazes back into the museum. The old man is gone.. All that remains is the timeless photo of Jessie Lee. After a few moments it dissolves into the face of NAT LOVE, then another black cowboy, then another and another.

FADE OUT

THE END